

MEDIEVAL
MOsaIC III



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[image]

MEDIEVAL MOSAIC III

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Acknowledgments:

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The most interesting information comes from children, for they tell all they know and then stop.
(Mark Twain)

This work is dedicated to those who've shown enthusiasm for our books:

Anna, Ben, Bern, Dad,
Dana, Doug, Kya, Matt, Mom,
Tracy, and Tracey

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Children's Literature

First, a few comments about childhood by Nicholas Orme, from *Childhood in Medieval England c. 500-1500*, published online as part of the *Representing Childhood* project (2005).

"A toy knight was part of a rich harvest of archaeological finds made in the mudbanks of the River Thames in London during the last 30 years. It was manufactured in about 1300, and illustrates several facets of medieval childhood. Then as now, children liked playing with toys. Then as now, they had a culture of their own, encompassing slang, toys, and games. Then as now, adults cared for children and encouraged their play. An adult made the toy knight and another adult bought it for a child, or gave a child money to buy it. The toy knight was made from a mould, and produced in large numbers. It probably circulated among the families of merchants, shopkeepers, and craft workers, as well as those of the nobility and gentry. The finds also include toys that girls might have liked: little cups, plates, and jugs, some sturdy enough to heat up water by a fireside. There is even a self-assembly kit: a cupboard cut out of a sheet of soft metal, instead of the plastic that would be used today.

"Toys give us a positive view of medieval childhood. Demography, the study of births and deaths, shows more of its darker side. The death rate among medieval children was high by modern standards. It has been suggested that 25% of them may have died in their first year, half as many (12.5%) between one and four, and a quarter as many (6%) between five and nine. There is no evidence that these deaths lessened parental affection and care for children, however, and the interest of adults in children can be traced throughout the middle ages.

"Medieval people inherited ideas about human life from the classical world. They thought they knew how infants grew in the womb and developed and matured after they were born. Life was viewed as a sequence of stages—"the ages of man." Infancy up to the age of 7 was viewed as a time of growth, childhood from 7 to 14 as one of play, and adolescence from 14 onwards as one of physical, intellectual, and sexual development.

"Medieval childhood was a rich and varied state, since children varied from one another as much as adults did. It differed chiefly from modern western society in its mortality and in the fact that many young people started serious work at an earlier age. Most of what we associate with childhood, however, existed for children in the Middle Ages: upbringing at home, play, special treatment according to age, and training for adult life and work. The

concentration of historians on adults in the Middle Ages does insufficient justice to the fact that about one third of the population was usually under the age of 14."

About the Author:

Nicholas Orme (1942 -) is a British historian specializing in the Middle Ages and Tudor period, focusing on the history of children, and ecclesiastical history, with a particular interest in South West England. An Emeritus Professor of History at Exeter University, Orme studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, and has worked as a visiting scholar at, among others, Merton College, Oxford, St John's College, Oxford, and the University of Arizona. In addition to his many scholarly works, Orme has published *Ten Cathedral Ghosts* (2022), a volume of historically themed ghost stories.

Comment:

Medieval Children (2001), by Nicholas Orme is a book on the history of childhood in England from Anglo-Saxon times to the sixteenth century — the first of its kind. The book addresses what is considered Philippe Ariès's central thesis in *Centuries of Childhood*, that there was no medieval understanding of childhood as a phase, an idea that critics have said Orme refutes successfully. Orme states that childhood was a phase distinct from the rest of life, with parents who genuinely cherished and grieved for their children, similar to modern parents. He says, "It cannot be over-emphasized that there is nothing to be said for Aries's view of childhood in the middle ages. ... Aries's views were mistaken: not simply in detail but in substance. It is time to lay them to rest."

Our own varying roles as parents, teachers, readers, and researchers lead us to agree whole-heartedly with Orme. Nature endowed human parents, as well as most other animal parents, with an instinct for cherishing, protecting, and guiding children to adulthood. This instinct did not just suddenly appear at the end of the Medieval period; it existed through all of our evolution.

And here's a quick look at *Fleas, Flies, and Friars: Children's Poetry from the Middle Ages* (2012) by Nicholas Orme.

Publisher's Description:

Medieval children lived in a world rich in poetry, from lullabies, nursery rhymes, and songs to riddles, tongue twisters, and nonsensical verses. They read or listened to stories in verse: ballads of Robin Hood, romances, and comic tales. Poems were composed to teach them how to behave, eat at meals, hunt game, and even learn Latin and French. In *Fleas, Flies, and Friars*, Nicholas Orme, an expert on childhood in the Middle Ages, has gathered a

wide variety of children's verse that circulated in England beginning in the 1400s, providing a way for modern readers of all ages to experience the medieval world through the eyes of its children.

Walter of Bibbesworth, a 13th century knight, offered up this poem to remind children how to dress themselves:

Put your clothes on; don't refuse
Breeches, gloves, and also shoes;
Hat on head for rain or sun;
Buttons – do up every one.
Put your belt around your waist,
Then make sure the end is placed
Through the buckle till the pin
Holds the belt-end safely in.

A 16th century nursery rhyme:

Tom-a-lin and his wife and his wife's mother,
They went over a bridge all three together.
The bridge was broken and they fell in;
'The devil go with all,' said Tom-a-lin.

A tongue-twister from the 15th century:

Three grey greedy geese
Flew o'er three green greasy furrows;
The geese were grey and greedy,
The furrows green and greasy.

A riddle found in school exercise books:

Three headless men played at ball;
One handless man served them all;
One mouthless man stood and laughed
As a cripple dragged his cloak.

A Christmas carol from the early 16th century:

Make we merry, both more and less
For now is the time of Christmas!

Let no man come into this hall,
Groom, page, nor yet marshal,
But that some sport he bring withal,
For now is the time of Christmas!

If that he say he cannot sing,
Some other sport then let him bring,
That it may please at this feasting,

For now is the time of Christmas!

If he say he can naught do,
Then for my love ask him no moe,
But to the stocks then let him go,
For now is the time of Christmas!



Varieties of Children's Literature

Children experienced literature in the Middle Ages both orally and in written form. The oral tradition was no doubt the primary method since it was accessible to all children, whatever their social status. Books were expensive and less widely available. Those dedicated to education taught medieval children everything from how to read and what good behavior looked like, to history, science, and philosophy. Books intended to entertain were less available, but they did exist in the form of poetry, songs, romances, and fables.

ABC Poems:

Like today, children in the Middle Ages were taught to read using ABC poems. One that survives in an English manuscript from c. 1430 is called *The ABC of Aristotle*, or sometimes, "Lerne or be Lewde" (Learn or Be Ignorant). (See articles on Aristotle and ABC books below.)

Conduct Manuals:

There was an entire genre of literature dedicated to teaching children how to behave. Members of the aristocracy would be taught how to rule through texts known as *Speculum Principis* (A Mirror for Princes). Members of the upper and middle classes would be taught courtesy and good manners. Of utmost concern were table manners. Children must, of course, "pick not their nose, and especially remember that before their sovereign they should not scratch and rub themselves."

Children were reminded "not to give credence to every tale they heard, and to not be hasty in seeking vengeance." They should "light a fire in the morning and at night to protect against black mist and the pestilence," and they should always "avoid sloth in the mornings and idleness, and also liars and lechers." (See article on William Caxton below.)

Educational Texts:

There were also texts dedicated to religion, philosophy, astrology, history, and science. Geoffrey Chaucer, for example, wrote a short scientific treatise on how to use an astrolabe for his 10-year-old son, Lewis. An astrolabe is a

complex astrological instrument that allows the user to observe the sun and the stars. Basically, it helps you locate the angle of the sun and stars in the sky so that you can tell what time of day it is, the latitude, and where the constellations are according to the time of the year. It was an important scientific instrument of the time, and Chaucer wrote a manual for "Lytle Lowys my son" in simple language so that his son could learn how to use it.

Songs and Rhymes:

Lullabies and nursery rhymes were as popular in the Middle Ages as they are today and were often used as a tool for teaching reading and language skills. Many of the nursery rhymes we know today probably have roots in the Middle Ages. This old lullaby looks like something we would sing today:

Lullay, lullow, lully, lullay,
Dewy, bewy, lully, lully,
Bewy, lully, lullow, lully,
Lullay, baw, baw, my barne,
Slepe softly now.

Rhymes and chants were also used to accompany skipping rope and clapping games. (*See article on skipping rhymes below.*)

Fables:

Aesop's fables were very popular in the Middle Ages. Stories like *The Ant and The Grasshopper*, or *The Crow and The Pitcher*, would have entertained children with their amusing stories while educating them about the ways of the world. (*See article on Aesop below.*)

Folktales and Romances:

The tales of Robin Hood and romances featuring valiant knights also circulated commonly in both oral and manuscript form. The daring deeds of figures like Robin Hood, and the wonders of a knight fighting a dragon would have appealed to kids then as much as they do today. Many of the fairy tales that we know and love today come from the medieval period or earlier. Cinderella, for example, was first recorded in 9th century China.

Tongue Twisters:

These are perhaps not considered part of children's literature, but they were as much fun and as challenging in the Medieval period as they are today. Then as now, they serve to educate as well as entertain, increasing verbal agility. (*See article on tongue twisters below.*)



Aristotle

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) was an Ancient Greek philosopher and polymath. His writings cover a broad range of subjects spanning the natural sciences, philosophy, linguistics, economics, politics, psychology, and the arts. As the founder of the Peripatetic school of philosophy in the Lyceum in Athens, he began the wider Aristotelian tradition that followed, which set the groundwork for the development of modern science.

Historians have come across at least 15 manuscript copies of the ABC of Aristotle. They were copied between the mid-15th and early 16th centuries and were typically found with other texts for educating or offering advice on matters of daily life. While the text teaches some words, its main aim is to give the reader moral instruction, usually by avoiding various bad behaviors.

The first translation was done by Edith Ricket as part of *The babes' book: medieval manners for the young*, published in 1905.

Whoso wills to be wise and worship desires,
Learn he one letter and look on another,
Of the A B C of Aristotle. Argue not against that.
It is counsel for right many clerks and knights a thousand,
And eke it might amend a man, full oft,
For to learn lore of one letter, and his life save;
For too much of any thing was never wholesome.
Read oft on this roll, and rule thee thereafter.
Whoso be grieved in his ghost, govern him better;
Blame he not the bairn that this ABC made,
But wite he his wicked will and his work after.

It shall never grieve a good man, though the guilty be mended,
Now hearken and hear how I begin.

Be not too —

A Amorous, too Adventurous, nor Argue too much.
B Bold, too Busy, nor Babble too long.
C Courteous, too Cruel, nor Care too sorely.
D Dull, too Dreading, nor Drink too oft.
E Elenge, too Excellent, nor too Earnest neither.
F Fierce, too Familiar, but Friendly of cheer.
G Glad, too (vain-)Glorious, and Gelousy thou hate.
H Hasty, too Hare-brained, nor too Heavy in thy Heart.
J Jetting, too Jangling, nor Jape not too oft.
K Kind, too Keeping, and beware of Knaves' tricks.
L Loth, too Loving, nor too Liberal of goods.
M Meddling, too Merry, but as Measure asketh.

N (an-)Noying, too Nice, nor too New-fangled either.
O Overbold, too Overthwart, and hate thou Oaths.
P Praising, too Privy with Princes or dukes.
Q Quaint, too Querulous, and Queme thy master.
R Riotous, too Revelling, nor Rage too Rudely.
S Strange, too Stirring, nor Stare too strangely.
T Toiling, too Tale-bearing, for Temperance is best.
V Vengeful, too Envious, and (a-)Void all Villainy.
W Wild, too Wrathful, nor Waste, nor Wade too deep.

For a Measurable Mean is best for us all.
Learn this or go Lacking.

Here are meanings for some of the lesser-known words:

Wite — blame
Elenge — melancholy
Gelousy — jealousy
Jetting — ostentatious
Jangling — chattering
Jape — joke
Nice — particular
Overthwart — obstinate
Privy — in the confidence of
Queme — please

William Caxton

William Caxton (c. 1422 – c. 1491) was an English merchant, diplomat, and writer. He is thought to be the first person to introduce a printing press into England (in 1476), and as a printer to be the first English retailer of printed books.

Although the first book that he is known to have produced was an edition of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, he went on to publish chivalric romances, classical works and English and Roman histories, and to edit many others. He was the first to translate *Aesop's Fables* in 1484. He is credited with printing as many as 108 books, 87 of which were different titles.

These texts were probably shared by, rather than produced for, children but Caxton is also credited with writing and publishing *Caxton's Book of Curtesye* (1477-1478). A modern version, edited by Frederick James Furnivall is currently available.

This work serves as a guide for young individuals, particularly children, on proper behavior and social etiquette in a refined society, emphasizing the

importance of virtue over vice as they grow and learn. The opening presents a thoughtful introduction aimed at a young audience named "Lytle Johan," who is encouraged to develop virtuous habits from an early age. The text elaborates on foundational principles of conduct, suggesting a variety of manners, including how to present oneself, engage politely in conversation, and observe cleanliness. The piece establishes a framework of expectations for social interactions, emphasizing the importance of humility, respect, and attentiveness, while warning against bad habits and negative behaviors. Overall, it sets the tone for a comprehensive moral instruction, addressing both spiritual and practical aspects of upbringing.



Words and Phrases

childhood

"Childhood" refers to the period in a person's life from infancy until adolescence, roughly ages 1-12. It is a crucial time for development, learning, and forming emotional bonds. The word comes from Old English *cild*, meaning "fetus, infant, unborn or newly born person," and *hood*, a word-forming element meaning "state or condition of being."

The French historian Philippe Ariès argued that the concept of childhood did not emerge in Europe until the 1600s. Other historians like Nicholas Orme have challenged this view and argued that childhood has been seen as a separate stage since at least the medieval period.

It seems obvious to us that adults have always seen children as separate beings, innocent and in need of protection and training, and that childhood and adolescence were necessary separate stages of life leading to adulthood. We look at a cat with her kittens, a sparrow with its nestlings, or an elephant with its calf, and see ourselves doing the same things: guiding and protecting our offspring as they grow and learn.

The age at which children are considered responsible for their society-bound actions (e. g. marriage, voting, etc.) has changed over time, which is reflected in the way they are treated in courts of law. In Roman times, children were regarded as not culpable for crimes. In the 1800s, children from the age of seven forward were considered responsible for their actions. Therefore, they could face criminal charges, be sent to adult prison, and be punished like adults by whipping, branding, or hanging. However, courts at the time would consider the offender's age when deliberating sentencing.

The English philosopher John Locke, in *An Essay Concerning Human*

Understanding (1689), argued that individuals are born empty of any built-in mental content, so that all knowledge comes from later perceptions or sensory experiences. Proponents typically form the extreme "nurture" side of the nature versus nurture debate, arguing that humans are born without any "natural" psychological traits and that all aspects of one's personality, social and emotional behavior, knowledge, or sapience are later imprinted by one's environment onto the mind as one would onto a wax tablet. A corollary of this doctrine was that the mind of the child was born blank, and that it was the duty of the parents to imbue the child with correct notions.

Locke did not believe, however, that the mind is literally blank or empty prior to experience. He acknowledged an innate power of "reflection" (awareness of one's own ideas, sensations, emotions, and so on) as a means of exploiting the information learned by experience as well as a limited realm of a priori (nonexperiential) knowledge.

The Latin *tabula rasa*, "clean slate" in English, originates from the Roman *tabula*, a wax-covered tablet used for notes, which was blanked (*rasa*) by heating the wax and then smoothing it. This roughly equates to the English term "blank slate" (or, more literally, "erased slate") which refers to the emptiness of a slate prior to it being written on with chalk. Both may be renewed repeatedly, by melting the wax of the tablet or by erasing the chalk on the slate.

literature

Literature is a body of written works of a language, period, subject, or culture that expresses ideas, emotions, and stories, often with a lasting impact on readers and society. It serves as a mirror to human experiences, exploring themes that range from love and loss to identity and conflict. Literature has been essential for cultural preservation, intellectual development, and creative expression across centuries. It is a method of recording, preserving, and transmitting knowledge and entertainment.

The word is used more narrowly for writings specifically considered to be an art form, especially novels, plays, and poems. This writing is characterized by excellence of style and expression and by themes of enduring interest, especially of recognized artistic value.

The term "literature" originates from the Latin word *litera*, meaning "letter of the alphabet" and also "a writing, document, or record." From this root, the following words evolved:

- litteratura: learning by letters, book-learning (obsolete)
- litteratus: learned
- litteratus homo: educated person

Perhaps Ezra Pound, in his *ABC of Reading*, expressed it best: "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree."

In Ancient Greece and Rome, literature was primarily associated with oral tradition, including epic poems and dramatic performances. Written literature, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, appeared by the 8th century BCE. Greek philosophers and rhetoricians began to develop theories of literature, focusing on elements such as plot, character, and style.

In Medieval Europe, literature included religious writings, romances, and chivalric tales. The rediscovery of classical literature in the Renaissance led to a revival of interest in form and style. Humanism emphasized the importance of individual experience and expression in literature and literary criticism emerged as a field of study, with critics analyzing and interpreting literary works.

peace

Peace is a state of harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a societal sense, peace is commonly used to mean the absence of war and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups.

However, the word also means a state of tranquility or serenity and that's how it was used in a medieval conduct manual: "Children were supposed to 'keep their feet and fingers and hands still and in peace.'"

The term "peace" originates from the Anglo-French *pes*, and the Old French *pais*, meaning "peace, reconciliation, silence, agreement," which, in turn, came from the Latin *pax*, meaning "peace, compact, agreement, treaty of peace, tranquility, absence of hostility, harmony."

Capitalized, *Pax* was the name of the Roman goddess of peace. The word has been used to describe peaceful periods of history, such as the Pax Romana and Pax Britannica. The Greek goddess of peace was Eirēnē.

The English word came into use in various personal greetings from c. 1300. In many languages, the word 'peace' is still used as a greeting or a farewell, for example the Hawaiian word *aloha*, as well as the Arabic word *salaam*.

Other uses of 'peace' include:

- a type of hybrid tea rose
- the Native American peace pipe
- peace-officer

- peace offering
- the U.S. Peace Corps, set up March 1, 1962
- peace sign

nursery rhymes

Nursery rhymes (also called Mother Goose rhymes) are short, traditional poems or songs for children that often tell a story or convey a simple message. Some nursery rhymes have historical origins and may contain hidden meanings or references to past events. Most people's first experience with poetry comes in the form of nursery rhymes—the lullabies, counting games, riddles, and rhymed fables that introduce us to the rhythmic, mnemonic, and allegorical uses of language in poems sung or recited by parents.

We can trace the original authors of only a few of these works. Most of them have been handed down from parents to their children for generations and were only recorded in print long after their first appearance in the language. The first English collections, *Tommy Thumb's Song Book* and a sequel, *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*, were published by Mary Cooper in 1744.

The oldest children's songs for which records exist are lullabies, found in every human culture, intended to help a child fall asleep. The English term lullaby is thought to come from "lu, lu" or "la la" sounds made by mothers or nurses to calm children, and "by by" or "bye bye," either another lulling sound or a term for a good night. Until the modern era, lullabies were usually recorded only incidentally in written sources. The Roman nurses' lullaby, *Lalla, Lalla, Lalla, aut dormi, aut lacta*, is recorded in a scholium on Persius and may be the oldest to survive.

A French poem, similar to *Thirty days hath September*, numbering the days of the month, was recorded in the 1200s. From the later Middle Ages, there are records of children's short rhyming songs, often as marginalia. From the mid-1500s, they began to be recorded in English plays. *Pat-a-cake* is one of the oldest surviving English nursery rhymes. The earliest recorded version of the rhyme appears in Thomas d'Urfey's play *The Campaigners* from 1698.

Most nursery rhymes were not written down until the 1700s when the publishing of children's books began to move from education towards entertainment, but there is evidence for many rhymes existing before this, including *To market, to market* and *Cock a doodle doo*, which date from at least the late 1500s. Nursery rhymes with 17th-century origins include *The Grand Old Duke of York* (1642), *Lavender's Blue* (1672), and *Rain Rain Go Away* (1687).

These rhymes seem to have come from a variety of sources, including

traditional riddles, proverbs, ballads, lines of Mummers' plays, drinking songs, historical events, and, it has been suggested, ancient pagan rituals. One example of a nursery rhyme in the form of a riddle is *As I was going to St Ives*, which dates to 1730. About half of the currently recognized "traditional" English rhymes were known by the mid-1700s.

Many ideas about links between rhymes and historical persons, or events, can be traced back to Katherine Elwes' book *The Real Personages of Mother Goose* (1930), in which she linked famous nursery rhyme characters with real people, on little or no evidence. She posited that children's songs were a form of coded historical narrative, propaganda or covert protest, and did not believe that they were written simply for entertainment.

For example, "Ring Around the Rosie" is believed to have originated during the Black Death plague of the 14th century, where "ring around the rosie" was a reference to the rash that appeared on the skin of plague victims, "pocket full of posies" referred to the flowers people carried to mask the smell of death, and "ashes, ashes" referred to the cremation of the dead.

While some of the words and their spellings, and even the length of the lines and stanzas, have changed over the years, the rhymes we know and love today are remarkably similar to the originals. Below are a few of the best-known English and American nursery rhymes. (The dates indicate first known publication.)

Jack Sprat (1639)

Jack Sprat was a 1500s English nickname for men of short stature. That likely accounts for the opening line, "Jack Sprat did eat no fat, and his wife could eat no lean."

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep (1744)

Whether it was written about the trade of enslaved people or as a protest against wool taxes, it remains a popular way to sing our children to sleep.

Hickory, Dickory Dock (1744)

This nursery rhyme likely originated as a counting-out game (like *Eeny Meeny Miny Moe*) inspired by the astronomical clock at Exeter Cathedral. Apparently, the door to the clock room had a hole cut into it so the resident cat could enter and keep the clock free of vermin.

This Little Piggy (1760)

Once you get to the pinky toe, the piggy always cries wee wee wee, all the way home.

Simple Simon (1760)

This one has come down to us as 14 four-line stanzas illustrating a young man's series of misadventures, thanks in no small part to his "simple" nature.

Hey Diddle Diddle (1765)

A cat playing a fiddle was a popular image in early medieval illuminated manuscripts.

Jack and Jill (1765)

Scholars believe that Jack and Jill are not actual names but Old English archetypes of boy and girl. In at least one instance, Jill isn't a girl at all. In John Newbery's *Mother Goose's Melodies*, the woodcut illustration shows a Jack and a Gill—two boys—making their way up a hill in what has become one of the most popular nonsense verses of all time.

Humpty Dumpty (1797)

Originally thought to be a type of riddle, Humpty Dumpty was first published in Samuel Arnold's *Juvenile Amusements* in 1797. His first appearance as an egg was in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*.

One, Two, Buckle My Shoe (1805)

A straightforward counting rhyme meant to help children learn their numbers.

Little Bo Peep (1810)

The rhyme is thought to be a reference to a peek-a-boo type children's game that goes back to the 1500s. The phrase "bo beep," however, goes back two hundred years earlier than that, and refers to the punishment of being made to stand in the pillory. How and when it came to reference a young shepherdess is unknown.

ABC books

An alphabet book, or ABC book, is a type of children's book giving basic instruction in an alphabet. Intended for young children, alphabet books commonly use pictures, simple language, and alliteration to aid language learning. Alphabet books introduce the sounds and letters of an ordered alphabet.

The oldest alphabet book known is Thomas Petyt's *The BAC Bothe in Latyn and in Englysshe* (1538), and included the alphabet, a table of vowels and syllables, prayers, and graces for meals. The first alphabet book to be accompanied by pictures is John Hart's *A Methode; or, Comfortable Beginning for All Unlearned* (1570).

From the 1400s through the 1700s, the teaching of the Roman alphabet was associated with religious instruction. The primer, or book of prayer and

religious instruction for students of all ages, often opened with a page of the letters of the alphabet, as well as a short catechism. During this period in England, there was a distinction between the ABC, the first text, and the primer, the second text. The ABC with the catechism, the standard ABC book of its time, sold hundreds of thousands of copies during the next century.

The proliferation of alphabet books right up to the present speaks to their importance; while not always appreciated as works of art, they frequently serve as the basis for literacy in societies around the world. Perhaps less formal than the novel or the textbook proper, alphabet books continue to serve an important function in the instruction of literacy in those young and/or new to a given language.

Alphabet books are important to early development, or early engagement with a language; they provide opportunities for readers to develop and enhance identification skills, to encourage letter recognition, to acquire and understand new words, to promote the mastery of letter forms, and to provide a variety of other learning experiences. As a result of coming into contact with alphabet books, children are exposed to skills such as sequencing, matching, classification, discrimination of likenesses and differences, rhyming, recall, memory, drawing conclusions, and following directions.

An example of the reliance on the alphabet for reading instruction is found in John Bunyan's *A Book for Boys and Girls or Country Rhymes for Children* (1686).

To those who are in years but Babes I bow
My Pen to teach them what the Letters be,
And how they may improve their A. B. C.
Nor let my pretty Children them despise.
All needs must there begin, that would be wise,
Nor let them fall under Discouragement,
Who at their hornbook stick, and time hath spent,
Upon that A. B. C., while others do
Into their primer or their Psalter go.

As referenced in this verse, it was an expectation of the period that "babes" began as readers with knowledge of the alphabet. Armed with the letters of the alphabet from the hornbook, children encountered other early forms of reading materials.

hornbook

A "hornbook" is a single-sided alphabet tablet, which served from medieval times as a primer for study, and sometimes included vowel combinations, numerals, and short verse. The hornbook was in common use in England

around 1450, but may have originated more than a century earlier. It is a form of the ABC book.

Horn books were tablets designed primarily to teach the alphabet to children laid out as an abecedarium, the elementary method of teaching used from Antiquity to the Middle Ages where letters of the alphabet were taught by rote. However, religion and instruction were inseparable, so the hornbooks also contained religious verses and parables. Though the church feared how advancements in technology might affect their beliefs, literacy remained a sought-after quality.

Because parchment was scarce and expensive, hornbooks consisted of a lesson sheet (usually vellum) mounted on a paddle of wood, bone, leather, silver, lead alloy, or stone. The vellum was protected by a thin sheet of translucent horn, or mica, held in place by narrow brass strips (latten) tacked through the horn to the paddle. The type ranged from plain and whittled, to carved, tooled, embossed, and engraved. The handle often had a hole for a cord or ribbon suspended from the child's belt at the waist or around the neck.

The name arose because the horn of oxen and sheep were used to make the laminating structure. The horn was left in cold water for several weeks, which separated the usable part from the bone. It was then heated, first in boiling water, then by fire, and pressed by plates and machines to make it smooth and transparent.

In colonial America, it was not uncommon to find the alphabet, along with rhymes, sayings, and prayers stitched in thread on linen. These personalized versions of handbooks were known as samplers and, in creating them, children actively committed the information to memory. Today, in the US, a hornbook means a text that gives an overview of a particular area of law.

The Roman rhetorician Quintilian (c. 68 CE) believed that children learned best through play and suggested the first incarnation of what we know today as alphabet blocks, claiming that the best way to learn the alphabet was to give children "blocks and tablets containing the letters to play with."

Perhaps the most popular form of hornbook amongst children was one made entirely from gingerbread with icing creating the traditionally written portion. Children would get to eat each letter as it was learned.

We could certainly go along with that method of teaching! Gingerbread with icing sounds positively delightful.

The word "jetting" is from *Aristotle's ABC*: "Be not too Jetting, too Jangling, nor Jape not too oft."

"Jetting" means "to sprout or spurt forth, shoot out," from French *jeter* "to throw, thrust." As in instruction to children, it means the child should not try to stand out, or push to be the center of attention.

jangling / chattering

"Jangling" means idle babbling, chattering, wrangling, or making a harsh or discordant often ringing sound, often associated with metal objects hitting each other, like keys or coins. It can also describe a feeling of nervousness or irritation, as in "jangling someone's nerves." (This is the current definition.)

The word comes from Old French *jangler* "to chatter, gossip, grumble, bawl, argue noisily." (12th century)

"Chatter" is also an old word and comes from *chateren* "to twitter, make quick, shrill sounds" (of birds), "to gossip, talk idly or thoughtlessly" (of persons).

jape / joke

The word "jape" is from *Aristotle's ABC*: "Be not too Jetting, too Jangling, nor Jape not too oft."

The verb "jape" means to joke or quip, to make sport of, to play tricks, or to jeer. It can mean a practical joke or a trick intended to amuse someone.

Jape mysteriously appeared in the English language during the 1300s and was adopted by literary folks, such as Geoffrey Chaucer, as a word meaning both "to trick" and "to jeer." It was also used, however, with the meanings "to seduce (someone)" or "to have sexual intercourse." This ambiguity forced writers to think twice about using "jape" in fear of misinterpretation. Ultimately, the word was avoided by writers, and by the end of the 1500s, it had fallen into disuse. But this four-letter word was not completely forgotten. It got its second chance when 19th-century writers began using its "jeer" meaning again — leaving its carnal meaning in oblivion.

"Joke" means a jest, something done to excite laughter, from Latin *iocus* "joke, jest, sport, pastime." It was originally a colloquial or slang word.

queme / please

The word "queme" is from *Aristotle's ABC*: "Be not too Quaint, too Querulous, and Queme thy master."

"Queme" means to please, to behave in a satisfying manner to someone. As an adjective, it can mean pleasant, agreeable, comfortable, or attractive. The word comes from Middle English, from Old English *gecwēme*; akin to Middle Dutch *bequame*: pleasant, fitting,

The verb "please" means to give enjoyment, pleasure, or satisfaction to; to make glad or contented. This is also a word for polite requests like, "Could you please pass the milk?" It arose circa 1300 from *plesen*, to please or satisfy (a deity), propitiate, appease, from Old French *plaisir* to please, give pleasure to, satisfy.

The word was formerly common in polite requests, such as "may it please you," or "if it please you," a mode of speech still common in addressing a judge or persons of rank or position, such as, "may it please the court," or "if it please your honor."

gyrdel / girdle

From *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*:

Lose not your gyrdel sitting at your mete

(Don't undo your girdle at table)

But yf ye seme ye be embraced streite

(if it's tight, let it out before you sit down)

Or then ye sytte / amende it secretly

So covertly that no wight you espye

Be ware also no breth from you rebounde

(Don't break wind up or down, beware that shameful sound)

The Old English word "gyrdel" meant a belt (without a buckle), sash, or cord drawn about the waist and fastened, worn by both men and women. Originally it was a belt to secure the clothes, but also for carrying a purse, a weapon, keys, and so on. Some were loose and essentially for decoration. Among the elite this might include precious metals and jewels. Today, "girdle" refers to an elasticized flexible undergarment worn over the waist and hips to make the body look more slender.

The men among the Ancient Greeks and Romans wore the girdle upon the loins, and it served them to confine the tunic, and hold the purse; pockets were unknown. Girls and women wore the girdle under the bosom.

Girdles are often portrayed as magical, giving power and strength if worn by men, and protection if worn by women.

In Greek mythology, both men and women were described as wearing girdles.

Hephaestus gifted his wife Aphrodite with a girdle that made the wearer irresistible to others, and which Hera used to seduce Zeus in the *Iliad*. For his ninth labor, Heracles was sent to obtain the girdle of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. In the *Odyssey*, Leucothea gives Odysseus a girdle-like "veil" that allows him to swim for three days straight.

Later, for women, the girdle became a sign of virginity, and was often considered to have magical properties. Monsters and all types of evil are recorded as being subdued by girdles in literature, a famous one being the dragon slain by Saint George. Marriage ceremonies continued this tradition of girdles symbolizing virginity by having the husband take the wife's girdle. Prostitutes were forbidden to wear them by law in historic France. Often in literature, women are portrayed as safe from sexual or other attack when wearing a girdle, but suddenly vulnerable if it is missing or stolen.

visage

From *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*:

Blowe not in your drynke ne in your pottage

(*Don't blow on your drink or food*)

Bere not your knyf toward your visage

(*or put your knife to your face*)

Clawe not your visage, touche not your hede

(*Don't scratch your face or your head*)

A "visage" is the face or facial expression of a person or the overall appearance of something, as in "the bleak visage of winter."

In *Ozymandias*, Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous poem, a traveler tells of a colossal statue's "shattered visage" lying half sunk in desert sands, going on to describe its "frown / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command..." Now, Shelley could have simply chosen "face," but that would mess up the sonnet's iambic pentameter, and a formal-sounding word is sometimes preferable to a basic one for all kinds of reasons, including sound, tone, or simply the cut of its jib. "Physiognomy," for instance, refers to facial features thought to reveal qualities of temperament or character, as when Emily Brontë writes in *Wuthering Heights*, "I thought I could detect in his physiognomy a mind owning better qualities than his father ever possessed." The word "countenance" is often used to refer to the face as an indication of mood or emotion, as in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: "Mina struggled hard to keep her brave countenance."

A famous use of visage is in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Brutus says: "... Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough / To mask thy monstrous visage?" Now there's a quote that might even give you nightmares.

salt cellar

From *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*:

Touche not with mete salt in the saler

(Don't dip your meat in the saltcellar)

Lene not upon the table, that is but rudeness

(Don't lean on the table)

Ouer the table ye shull not spette convey

(And don't spit over it)

A "salt cellar" refers to a container, in a wide range of sizes, holding salt for use in the kitchen or on a dining table and also to a salt shaker.

The phrase salt cellar is seen in English from the 15th century. It combines the English word salt with the Anglo-Norman word saler, which already by itself meant "salt container."

Salt cellars are known, in various forms, by assorted names including open salt, salt dip, standing salt, master salt, and salt dish. A master salt is the large receptacle from which the smaller, distributed, salt dishes are filled; according to fashion or custom it was lidded, or open, or covered with a cloth. A standing salt is a master salt, so-named because it remained in place as opposed to being passed. A trencher salt is a small salt cellar located next to the trencher (place setting). Open salt and salt dip refer to salt dishes that are uncovered.

Use of salt cellars is documented as early as ancient Rome and styles ranged from simple to ornate or whimsical, using materials including glass, ceramic, metals, ivory, and wood. Salt cellars were an early collectible as pieces of silver, pewter, glass, etc., and soon after their role at the table was replaced by the shaker, salt cellars became a popular collectible in any form.

The Romans had the salinum, a receptacle typically of silver and regarded as essential in every household. The salinum had ceremonial importance as the container of the (salt) offering made during the meal, but it was also used to dispense salt to diners.

During the Middle Ages, elaborate master salt cellars evolved. Placed at the head table, this large receptacle was a sign of status and prosperity, prominently displayed. It was usually made of silver and often decorated in motifs of the sea. In addition to the master salt, smaller, simpler salt cellars were distributed for diners to share. The social status of guests could be measured by their positions relative to the master's large salt cellar: high-ranking guests sat above the salt while those of lesser importance sat below

the salt.

Large, ornate master salts continued to be made through the Renaissance and Baroque periods, becoming more ceremonial. Tiny salt spoons appeared in the 1600s.

The Industrial Revolution in the late 18th to early 19th centuries rendered both salt and salt cellars commonplace. Pressed glass manufacture, the development of Sheffield plate (18th century), then electroplating (19th century), led to mass production of affordable silver-plated wares, including salt cellars. It was not until after 1911, when anti-caking agents began to be added to table salt, that salt shakers gained favor and open salts began to fall into disuse.

tongue twisters

A tongue twister is a word or a phrase that is difficult to articulate properly. They can be used as a type of spoken (or sung) word game or as exercises to improve pronunciation and fluency. Some tongue twisters produce results that are humorous (or humorously vulgar) when they are mispronounced, while others simply rely on the confusion and mistakes of the speaker for their amusement value.

Tongue twisters are useful in understanding how we process language: they have been used in scientific research to substantiate the claim that silent reading involves articulation. As dedicated readers, we agree. We know that if the main character in fiction has a name which is difficult to pronounce, we trip over that name every time we see it. This becomes very annoying and may even result in the book being thrown against the wall.

These fascinating tongue twisters have also been recommended for curing hiccups and for curing lisps and other speech defects. As well, they are used for testing the fit of dentures and for screening applicants for broadcasting positions.

Tongue twisters have been captivating people since ancient times. In various cultures, these word puzzles served as exercises to hone diction, elocution, and memory. Early examples can be traced back to languages like Sanskrit and Chinese, where complex combinations of sounds were used as linguistic challenges for scholars.

During the medieval period, tongue twisters thrived. Monks and scholars composed intricate verbal exercises as a form of mental gymnastics. These challenges not only tested one's mastery of language but also provided amusement in the midst of scholarly pursuits. Tongue twisters are often

passed on for generations, becoming a rich part of folklore.

During the Renaissance, tongue twisters found their way into written works. In the modern era, from Dr. Seuss's whimsical creations to viral challenges on social media platforms, tongue twisters are still providing linguistic practice and amusement.

These deliberately difficult expressions were very popular in the 19th century. The well-known "she sells seashells" tongue twister was originally published in 1850 as a diction exercise. It was turned into a popular song in 1908, with words by British songwriter Terry Sullivan and music by Harry Gifford.

She sells sea-shells by the sea-shore.
The shells she sells are sea-shells, I'm sure.
For if she sells sea-shells by the sea-shore
Then I'm sure she sells sea-shore shells.

Another well-known tongue twister is "Peter Piper":

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

Many tongue twisters use a combination of alliteration and rhyme. An example of this is the song *Betty Botter*, first published in 1899:

Betty Botter bought a bit of butter. "But," she said, "this butter's bitter!
If I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter!"
So she bought a bit of butter better than her bitter butter,
And she put it in her batter, and her batter was not bitter.
So 'twas better Betty Botter bought a bit of better butter.

There are twisters that make use of compound words and their stems, for example:

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck
if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
A woodchuck would chuck all the wood he could chuck
if a woodchuck would chuck wood.

Some tongue twisters take the form of words or short phrases which become tongue twisters when repeated rapidly (the game is often expressed in the form "Say this phrase three (or five, or ten, etc.) times as fast as you can!").

Examples include:

Toy boat
Cricket critic
Unique New York
A proper copper coffee pot

Other types of tongue twisters derive their humor from producing vulgar results only when performed incorrectly:

Old Mother Hunt had a rough cut punt
Not a punt cut rough,
But a rough cut punt.

In 1968, Jack Webb guested on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and took part in a parody of *Dragnet*. The premise was Webb (as Sgt. Joe Friday) grilling Carson about "kleptomaniac Claude Cooper from Cleveland, who copped clean copper clappers kept in a closet." The sketch was regularly shown on anniversary specials. We've seen it and it was hilarious.

Tongue twisters exist in many languages. For example in Spanish: *trabalenguas*, literally 'tongue jammer,' and in German: *Zungenbrecher*, literally 'tongue breaker.' We couldn't agree more.

The sign language equivalent of a tongue twister is called a finger-fumbler. Say that one three times fast! Funger-fibler!

skipping rhymes

Also known as jump roping, skipping can be traced back to ancient civilizations. In ancient Egypt, paintings and inscriptions dating to around 1600 BCE depict people jumping rope. It was also a popular activity among the ancient Greeks and Romans. In China, it was used as a way to train soldiers, while in India, it was practiced as a form of exercise and entertainment. In the Middle Ages, rope makers would use their products to organize rope skipping contests.

Skipping-rope rhymes (often similar to clapping rhymes) are chants or songs that children recite while jumping rope, often used to structure the game and make it more fun. These rhymes can vary widely and may include counting, instructions, or playful themes, and they have been part of children's folklore for centuries.

One popular chant is called *Miss Mary Mack*:

Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack
All dressed in black, black, black
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons
All down her back, back, back.
(or "Up and down her back back back")
She asked her mother, mother, mother
or fifty (or 15) cents, cents, cents
To see the elephants, elephants, elephants

(or hippos or cows)
Jump the fence, fence, fence.
They jumped so high, high, high
they reached the sky, sky, sky
And didn't (or never) come back, back, back
Till the 4th of July ly ly.
She asked her mother, mother, mother
For 5 cents more, more, more
To see the elephants, elephants, elephants
Jump the door, door, door.
They jumped to the flow flow flow
they stubbed their toe toe toe
and that was the end end end
of the elephant show show show.

Miss Mary Mack is one of the most popular jump rope rhymes, found in written form in the US in 1888. Little is known about who Mary Mack was but given the rhyme's geographical origin, it is believed that Mary Mack referred to the warship USS Merrimack named after the Merrimack River. The theory might be true as the Merrimack's color was black with silver rivets.

One rhyme that we remember from childhood:

I see London, I see France,
I see (xxx)'s underpants,
Not too big, not too small,
Just the size of Montreal.

(or a cannonball, Berlin Wall, etc.)

And here's an old one that probably everybody remembers:

Lizzie Borden took an axe
She gave her mother forty whacks,
After she saw what she had done,
She gave her father forty-one.
Lizzie Borden got away,
For her crime she did not pay.

In fact, Lizzie Borden was acquitted. But if she didn't kill her parents, who did? And why? If the answers are ever found, perhaps a new skipping rhyme can be made from them.



Suggested Reading

The Art and Literature of the Middle Ages: Art History Lessons Children's Arts, Music & Photography Books, by Baby Professor.

Publisher's Description: Step back in time and learn all about the art and literature of the Middle Ages. You will notice that the dominant art form of an era reflects what life was like back then. You will see familiar strokes and characters, making it easy to identify one art form to another.



Children's Literature: Aesop's Fables

One of the most enduring traditions of European culture, passed down for thousands of years, *Aesop's Fables* is a collection of stories which represents widely known and famous children's literature. These enchanting tales provide entertainment, instruction, and food for thought, offering valuable insights in the conduct of everyday life through animal characters and their relatable stories. The fables are full of humor, insight, and wit as well as many fascinating glimpses of everyday life. First published in English by Caxton in 1484, the fables and their morals continue to charm modern readers.

In their earliest form, the fables did not have the explicit moral statements that came to be attached to them later. The audience was left to determine the meaning of the fable, and this openness encouraged readers to think seriously about the stories. So, it makes sense to think of fables not only as stories for children but also as a kind of philosophy that can help us to understand life more clearly. Saying that fables are a kind of philosophy may seem ridiculous at first. After all, we are used to thinking of fables as having a clear and simple moral lesson, which is usually now explicitly stated for us at the end of the fable.

But these morals were not part of the fables as they were told in antiquity; they were added by later editors, and different editors have discovered different morals in the same fable. An example is the story of the grasshopper and the ants.

In this fable, the ants spend the summer gathering and storing food for the winter, while the grasshopper sings the summer away. When winter arrives, the grasshopper has no food because he has done no work, while the ants, who have worked hard, are well supplied with food. When the grasshopper comes to the ants looking for something to eat, the ants rather rudely tell him to dance and send him away, presumably to starve to death. The lesson, to some editors, is clear: "Provide today for the future" and this is probably the best-known moral to this fable.

But there are versions of the fable in which the grasshopper is presented as the hero, someone who wisely enjoys life while it lasts rather than spending it all in toil and drudgery as the ants do. And there are other versions where the ants and the grasshopper reconcile, throwing a party together at which the ants provide the refreshments and the grasshopper the entertainment.

Which of these versions is the "best" or the "correct" one largely depends on how the reader chooses to interpret it. Seen in the context of one set of values—the importance of thrift and hard work, and the bleak future faced by those

who lack these qualities—the ants are the heroes and the grasshopper deserves to starve to death.

In the context of another set of values—the ones that point out that life is too short to miss out on having fun, and that art needs no justification to exist—the grasshopper's search for joy and self-expression is the example to follow.

Try it yourself: Find a few fables you aren't familiar with, but cover up the moral at the end of each one. Then read the fable, write your own moral (or morals), and see how close you come to the one provided.

You may find that you have learned a very different lesson from the one the editors expected you to learn. That doesn't mean you are wrong, but it should give you something to think about, and in the end that is what philosophy is for.

About Aesop:

Aesop (c. 620-564 BCE) was a Greek fabulist and storyteller credited with a number of fables now collectively known as *Aesop's Fables*. Although his existence remains unclear and no writings by him survive, numerous tales credited to him were gathered across the centuries in a storytelling tradition that continues to this day. Over time, as particular fables came to be recognized and appreciated for their cleverness and utility, they came to be attributed to Aesop, just as today every clever remark eventually gets attributed to Mark Twain.

The name of Aesop is as widely known as any that has come down from Graeco-Roman antiquity. Scattered details of Aesop's life can be found in ancient sources, including Aristotle, Herodotus, and Plutarch. An ancient literary work called *The Aesop Romance* tells an episodic, probably highly fictional version of his life, including the traditional description of him as a strikingly ugly slave who by his cleverness acquires freedom and becomes an adviser to kings and city-states. *The Aesop Romance* became a folkbook, a work that belonged to no one, and the occasional writer felt free to modify as it might suit him.

Aesop may not have written his fables. However, *The Aesop Romance* claims that he wrote them down and deposited them in the library of Croesus; Herodotus calls Aesop a "writer of fables" and Aristophanes speaks of "reading" Aesop. Various Classical authors name Aesop as the originator of fables. Socrates, while in prison, turned some of the fables into verse. The early Roman playwright and poet Ennius also rendered at least one of Aesop's fables in Latin verse, of which the last two lines still exist.

Collections of what are claimed to be Aesop's fables were transmitted by a series of authors writing in both Greek and Latin. Demetrius of Phalerum made what may have been the earliest, probably in prose, contained in ten books for the use of orators, although that has since been lost. Next appeared an edition in elegiac verse, cited by the Suda, but the author's name is unknown. Phaedrus, a freedman of Augustus, rendered the fables into Latin in the 1st century CE. A 3rd-century author, Titianus, is said to have rendered the fables into prose in a work now lost. Avianus (of uncertain date, perhaps the 4th century) translated 42 of the fables into Latin elegiacs.

Aesop's Fables continued to be revised and translated through the ensuing centuries, with the addition of material from other cultures, so that the body of fables known today may bear little relation to those Aesop originally told. With a surge in scholarly interest beginning toward the end of the 20th century, some attempt has been made to determine the nature and content of the very earliest fables which may be most closely linked to the historic Aesop.



fable

A fable is a short fictional story that typically features animals as characters and conveys a moral lesson or truth. It is often used to teach important life lessons in an entertaining way. It can also mean a falsehood or a lie.

As folk literature, the fable is one of the most enduring forms, often spread by oral transmission rather than in print. The word comes originally from Latin *fabula* meaning "story with a lesson, tale, narrative, account; the common talk, news," literally "that which is told." The restricted sense of "animal story," common in the 1300s, comes from the popularity of Aesop's tales.

Henry David Thoreau had this to say about the fable: "The fable which is naturally and truly composed, so as to satisfy the imagination, ere it addresses the understanding, beautiful though strange as a wild-flower, is to the wise man an apothegm, and admits of his most generous interpretation. When we read that Bacchus made the Tyrrhenian mariners mad, so that they leapt into the sea, mistaking it for a meadow full of flowers, and so became dolphins, we are not concerned about the historical truth of this, but rather a higher poetical truth. We seem to hear the music of a thought, and care not if the understanding be not gratified." (*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*.)

fabulist

A fabulist is a writer of fables or a teller of tales, and may also be a liar. This

word comes from French *fabuliste*, from Latin *fabula*, meaning story or tale. The earlier word in English was fabler (late 1300s); the Latin term was *fabulator*.

If a fable is extremely pleasing or astonishing, you can say it's "fabulous," which means amazing, but also means legendary, of the nature of a fable or myth.

folkbook

A folkbook is a book or collection of folklore. An example is *The Aesop Romance* (see *About Aesop* above), a work that belongs to no one and cannot be attributed to any particular author. This folkbook began in ancient days and any writer who wished to do so could alter it to please himself.

Amid the vast body of folklore that exists, then, folk literature refers specifically to verbal stories, myths, legends, fables, poems, and songs. The history of folk literature is rich, vast, and varied. It encompasses the entirety of human history, and includes the very first stories humans told each other, as they sat around a fire in a cave, to make sense of the world around them.

As part of folklore, which may be understood as "the knowledge of the people," folk literature usually refers to the narratives and stories of a particular group, culture, or tradition that has been passed down the generations. Folk literature was not originally written down — instead, it was an oral form of literature which developed with each retelling. In this way, folk literature formed (and continues to form) a living part of a community's culture, tradition, and identity.

moral

As a noun, "moral" means:

- the lesson or principle taught by a fable, a story, or an event
- a concisely expressed precept or general truth; a maxim
- rules or habits of conduct, with reference to standards of right and wrong

Examples of use:

The moral of the story is to be satisfied with what you have.

The moral here is: pay attention to the warning lights in your car.

Socrates was accused of corrupting the morals of the youth of Athens.

He has no morals. (He is not a good or honest person.)

The word arose in the 1300s, meaning "associated with or characterized by right behavior," from Latin *moralis* "proper behavior of a person in society." From the late 1300s, it meant "of or pertaining to rules of right conduct" as

opposed to non-moral or amoral. It has given rise to phrases such as "moral support" and "moral victory."

Ethics and morals are often regarded as synonyms, but there is some distinction in how they are used. Morals often describe one's own particular values concerning what is right and what is wrong, while ethics can refer broadly to moral principles. For example, "Our class had a debate over the ethics of genetic testing."

As an example of an explicit maxim, at the end of Aesop's fable of the *Tortoise and the Hare*, in which the plodding and determined tortoise won a race against the much-faster yet extremely arrogant hare, the stated moral is "slow and steady wins the race." But the moral might also be "arrogance or overconfidence may lead to failure."

The Ants and the Grasshopper:

A Grasshopper that had merrily sung all the summer was almost perishing with hunger in the winter. So she went to some Ants that lived near, and asked them to lend her a little of the food they had put by. "You shall certainly be paid before this time of year comes again," said she.

"What did you do all the summer?" asked they.

"Why, all day long, and all night long too, I sang, if you please," answered the Grasshopper.

"Oh, you sang, did you?" said the Ants. "Now, then, you can dance."
(Moral: Provide today for the future.)

merrily

If you do something "merrily," you do it in a merry manner, with cheerfulness, liveliness, and good feelings. To be merry is to be happy, especially in a fun, festive way. Parties and celebrations are merry, and so are the fun people who attend them.

In Medieval times, "merry" meant delightful or pleasing. It was said of grass, trees, the world, music, and song, and also used as an adverb to mean "pleasantly, melodiously." The word had much wider senses in Middle English than modern: "pleasant-sounding" (of animal voices), "fine" (of weather), "handsome" (of dress), "pleasant-tasting" (of herbs).

Merry-bout meaning "an incident of sexual intercourse" was low slang from 1780. Merry-begot meant "illegitimate" or "bastard." Merrie England (now frequently satirical or ironic) arose c. 1400.

future

The "future" is a time yet to come or events which may happen. For example, "I will try to do better in the future." The arrival of the future (which then becomes the "present" and soon the "past") is considered inevitable due to the existence of time and the laws of physics.

Religions consider the future when they address issues such as karma, life after death, and eschatologies that study what the end of time and the end of the world will be. Religious figures such as prophets and diviners have claimed to see into the future, which, of course, is impossible. Weather forecasters prove that every day.

"Future" comes from the Latin root *futūrus* "about to be," and it is a noun or an adjective referring to things to come. We often imagine what will happen in the future. That's called day-dreaming or planning and sometimes takes more time and gives more pleasure than the actual event.

Aesop at Play:

An Athenian once found Aesop joining merrily in the sports of some children. He ridiculed him for his want of gravity, and Aesop good-temperedly took up a bow, unstrung it, and laid it at his feet. "There, friend," said he, "that bow, if kept always strained, would lose its spring, and probably snap. Let it go free sometimes, and it will be the fitter for use when it is wanted."

(Moral: Wise play makes wise work.)

play

"Play" is one of those simple, little, four-letter words which has proved so useful that the definitions of the way it's employed take up several fine-print dictionary pages. But play is mostly about having fun in a vast variety of ways, depending on what you consider fun, even including playing a hooked fish.

The word arises from Middle English *pleien*, from Old English *plegan*, meaning "to move lightly and quickly, amuse oneself, engage in active exercise, frolic, engage in children's play; make sport of, and perform music." Now, it's also used in sports, theater, performing any kind of life role, such as "playing the fool," card games, and gambling.

"Play" has been opposed to "work" since the late 1300s, but "play" is also used in serious ways. It can refer to specific actions, such as fair or foul play, or getting attention, such as getting a big play on TV. It can mean freedom of movement within a space, as in "there's too much play in the rope." It can mean to handle or manage, such as "they played water on the burning roof,"

or to operate equipment.

The word can mean manipulating people, as in "making a play for sympathy," or "he played his brothers against each other."

"Play" is used in several phrasal verbs. A phrasal verb is the combination of two or three words to form a single semantic unit. There are tens of thousands of them, and they are in everyday, constant use. So we have: play along, play around, play at, play down, play off, play on, play up, play back, and play out.

Because we have fun playing with words, we enjoy clever puns and idioms. Here are some idioms based on play:

- bring into play: cause to be introduced
- make a play for: try to attract or gain
- play both ends against the middle: set opposing interests against each other
- play fast and loose with: be clever in a dishonest way
- play for time: forestall an event or decision
- play into someone's hands: give an advantage to someone
- play one's cards right: maneuver skillfully
- play the field: date several persons simultaneously
- play with oneself: masturbate
- play ball: to cooperate
- play games: be evasive or deceptive
- play in Peoria: to be acceptable to average consumers
- play it by ear: improvise
- play possum: pretend to be sleeping or dead
- play the game: behave according to the accepted customs
- play with a full deck: be rational or sane
- play with fire: do something dangerous
- play the fool: pretend ignorance or be silly
- play second fiddle: in a subordinate position
- play havoc: cause chaos or confusion
- play a hunch: make an instinctive choice

wise

To be wise means to have common sense and good judgment. It can also mean to be well-informed, shrewd, or crafty. The word is related to the source of Old English *witan* "to know, be aware of." It's common in English now as a word-forming element, as in likewise or clockwise.

In US and Canadian slang, wise means cocksure or insolent. The word is also used in many idioms.

- wise as an owl: Exceptionally sound in judgment. The owl is a symbol of

Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, and has endured as a symbol of wisdom through the ages.

—a word to the wise: Used to introduce advice or a warning, suggesting that a smart person will understand the hint without needing a lengthy explanation.

—penny-wise and pound-foolish: Means being stingy about small expenditures and extravagant with large ones. This phrase alludes to British currency, in which a pound was once worth 240 pennies.

—be wise after the event: You understand a situation and know how to deal with it, but only because it has already happened.

—be wise to: Possess inside information.

—get wise: Catch on, no longer be deceived.

—where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise: If you don't know about something, you don't need to worry about it. From the 1742 poem *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, by Thomas Gray.

—wise apple, wise guy, wiseass, wiseacre, Wisenheimer (also an actual surname): These all mean "smart aleck."

—wisecrack: A witty or sarcastic comment or quip.

—early to bed and early to rise (makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise): Having heard this far too often when trying to sleep in, all we can do is repeat what Carl Sandburg said in 1928: "Early to bed and early to rise and you never meet any prominent people."

work

The brief definition of "work" is physical or mental activity directed toward producing or accomplishing something, such as building a bridge, kneading bread, or earning enough money to buy food. It can also mean the results of such effort, like a car, or clothes, or a work of art.

Work has always existed in all human societies, from gathering natural resources by hunter-gatherer groups to operating complex technologies today. It's also been intimately connected with other aspects of society and politics, such as power, class, tradition, rights, and privileges.

Similar to the word "play," work has many uses. We say it to mean the place or building where we work and the part of the day devoted to work. (I'll meet you after work.) It describes the working parts of a machine and whether or

not they function. (That clock doesn't work.) It can mean the movement of an object or a human face. It can also mean to cause strong emotion, as in working a crowd, and strong chemical reactions, such as in fermenting liquids.

In Physics, work means the transfer of energy from one physical system to another, especially the application of a force to move a body in a certain direction. It is calculated as the product of the force and the distance over which it is applied and is expressed in joules, ergs, and foot-pounds. But we're certainly not going there; our brains would seize up and stop working.

The word "work" comes from Middle English *worke* and Old English *worc* and the meanings haven't changed but simply multiplied. Today the word is often used in combination with other words. For example:

artwork, beadwork, breastwork, brickwork,
brushwork, bulwark, busy-work, case-work
clockwork, earthwork, field-work, framework
fretwork, groundwork, guess-work, handiwork,
homework, ironworks, piecework, etc.

Phrasal verbs with "work":

A phrasal verb is the combination of two or three words from different grammatical categories — a verb and a particle, such as an adverb or a preposition — to form a single semantic unit. There are thousands of them, and we use them every day. For example, the phrase "work out" can mean to work out a compromise, a plan, or a problem, which may or may not work out for you, and then you can go to the gym and work out. Like a worked-out mine, you'll be exhausted.

Other such verbs are: at work, work against or for, work around, work away, work beneath, work down, work in or into, work like, work off, work on or upon, work over, work through, work towards, and work up.

Words connected to work:

ergasiophobia: an abnormal fear of work

ergology: study of the effects of work on mind and body

ergomania: obsession with exercise or work

ergophile: a person who loves to work

ergophobia: a hatred of work

flexitime: a system for workers to choose what hours they work

sinecure: a paid job that requires little or no work attendance

thaasophobia: an abnormal fear of being idle

workaholic: person with a compulsive need to work

Idioms:

—all work and no play (makes Jack a dull boy): This means that without time off from work, a person becomes both bored and boring. Some writers have added a second part to the proverb, as in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (1825) by the Irish novelist Maria Edgeworth:

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,

All play and no work makes Jack a mere toy.

—throw a monkey wrench in the works: sabotage a plan

—work both sides of the street: engage in double-dealing

—have (one's) work cut out for one: to have all one can handle

—dirty work: unpleasant tasks, sometimes illicit or disreputable

—the works:

a. everything; as in a hamburger with the works

b. harsh or cruel treatment

close enough for government work: just good enough. The phrase implies that government work is usually of mediocre quality.

a piece of work: an unpleasant, difficult person

work under the table: work for pay that is not officially documented and has not been taxed.

work without a net: take action that is risky

Food for Thought

Unemployed people (for example, actors between plays) are like ghosts looking for bodies to inhabit. (Gail Godwin)

Erosion is the work of wind, water, and time.

Work is the curse of the drinking classes. (Oscar Wilde)



The Fox and the Stork:

A fox one day invited a stork to dine with him and, wishing to be amused at

his expense, put the soup which he had for dinner in a large flat dish, so that, while he himself could lap it up quite easily, the Stork could only dip in the tips of his long bill.

Some time after, the Stork, bearing his treatment in mind, invited the Fox to take dinner with him. He, in his turn, put some minced meat in a long and narrow-necked vessel, into which he could easily put his bill, while Master Fox was forced to be content with licking what ran down the sides of the vessel. The Fox then remembered his old trick, and could not but admit that the Stork had well paid him out.

(Moral: A joke is often returned with interest.)

fox

A fox is a small to medium-sized wild mammal related to dogs, known for its pointed face, upright ears, bushy tail, and cunning behavior. The noun is also used to mean a crafty, sly, or clever person. As a verb, "to fox" means to trick by ingenuity or cunning.

The fox holds significant symbolism in folklore and mythology worldwide. It's often portrayed in stories as a clever trickster as well as a guardian and messenger. Because of its versatility and agility, the fox can thrive in various surroundings, the sign of an ability to manage unpredictable circumstances. Further, its acute hearing and eyesight highlight the significance of being alert and vigilant.

"Fox" comes from Old English and has been in use since at least 1200 CE. The metaphoric extension to "clever person" is nearly as old.

An Old English translation of the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* of Sextus Placitus advises, for women "who suffer troubles in their inward places, work for them into a salve a foxes limbs and his grease, with old oil and with tar; apply to the womens places; quickly it healeth the troubles." Rubbing a fox's testicles on warts was supposed to be a means to get rid of them. That, if nothing else, should make us appreciate modern medicine.

Today, "fox" can mean a sexually attractive woman. "Foxed," referring to old books, means "stained with fox-colored marks" (rusty red-brown). To "outfox" someone is to surpass them in cleverness or cunning; to outsmart them.

vessel

What do a canoe, a soda can, and your arteries have in common? Each one is a type of vessel. A vessel can be a ship, a container for holding liquids, or a tube that transports blood throughout your body.

The word vessel, found in records from the 1200s, comes from the Latin word, *vascellum*, which also means "vase" and "ship." The association between hollow utensils and boats appears in all languages. The figurative use to describe a person regarded as a recipient or bearer of some abstract quality dates to the 1300s.

Types of vessels:

- barrel: cylindrical vessel or cask
- bowl: round, low vessel to hold liquids
- can: a sheet-metal vessel used to contain liquids, etc.
- carrack: a ship used for trading but fitted for fighting
- crucible: used in chemistry
- retort: used in chemistry
- tub: an open wooden vessel made of staves
- urn: used to preserve the ashes of the dead, also as a ballot box and for drawing lots



The Lion and the Mouse

A Lion, tired with the chase, lay sleeping at full length under a shady tree. Some Mice scrambling over him while he slept, awoke him. Laying his paw upon one of them, he was about to crush him, when the Mouse implored his mercy. "Spare me, O King!" said he, "and maybe the day will come when I can be of service to you."

The Lion, tickled with the idea of the Mouse helping him, lifted his paw and let the little creature go.

Some time after, the Lion was caught in a net laid by some hunters, and, unable to free himself, made the forest resound with his roars. The Mouse whose life had been spared came, and with his little sharp teeth soon gnawed the ropes asunder, and set the Lion free.

(Moral: The least may help the greatest.)

mouse

A mouse is a small rodent with a pointed snout, small rounded ears, a body-length scaly tail, and a high breeding rate. Due to its adaptability to almost any environment, the mouse is one of the most successful mammals on Earth today. Similar animals are the jumping mouse, the vole, and the jerboa. But the word "mouse" is also used to describe a timid person, a dark-colored swelling caused by a blow and, in the computer world, a small mobile manual device that controls movement of the cursor and selection of functions.

"Mouse" comes from the Sanskrit word for mouse, *musuka*, which in turn

derives from the Sanskrit *mus* meaning thief or robber, presumably referring to the fact that mice like to steal food from humans, particularly grains and fruits. The computer pointing device was named "mouse" because the original device had the cord coming out of the back of it, which was thought to resemble a tail.

Interesting Mouse Facts:

—In Ancient Egypt, cooked mice were thought to treat smallpox, whooping cough, and measles, among other health-related problems.

—Mouse urine glows under florescent light.

—Mice reproduce very rapidly, beginning breeding at around two months old and able to produce around 6-10 litters per year with about 5-10 baby mice per litter.

—Despite their propensity to spread disease, mice clean themselves regularly, not unlike cats, and they organize their homes with specific areas for storing food, elimination, sleeping, and so on.

—The incisors in a mouse's mouth never stop growing and can grow as much as five inches per year. Because of this, mice like to gnaw on hard objects to grind their teeth down.

—Mice can jump down from a height of 12 feet without any injury. Amazingly, some mice can also jump as high as one foot vertically.

—Rodents cause around one billion dollars worth of damage every year in the US alone. They are particularly notorious for commercial crop destruction and chewing electrical lines, which tends to cause equipment malfunctions and creates a fire hazard.

—Mice were kept as pets as far back as 1100 B.C. in China.

—Researchers in Israel have successfully trained mice to be used as bomb and drug detectors. The mice are kept in containers and if the mice detect any explosives or drugs, they trigger an alarm by pressing a button. Each mouse can work in four hour shifts and have proven to be more accurate than x-ray machines and dogs.

tickle

When you tickle someone, you touch them in a way that makes them laugh and squirm. It's impossible to tickle yourself—you can only tickle others. An itching sensation is also sometimes referred to as a tickle, like the tickle in your throat when you're getting sick. Colloquially, you can tickle someone (or

tickle them pink) by delighting them.

In addition to its literal meanings, "tickle" is also used figuratively in a few ways:

- to arouse or provoke: "Her question tickled my curiosity."
- to stimulate or excite: "The spicy food tickled my taste buds."
- to amuse or entertain: "His witticism tickled my fancy."

"Tickling the ivories" is a euphemism for playing the piano.

Then, there's trout tickling, which is the art of rubbing the underbelly of a trout with fingers. If done properly, the trout will go into a trance after a minute or so, and can then easily be retrieved and thrown onto the nearest bit of dry land.

Trout tickling has an ancient history. Aelian, a Greek writer of about 230 CE, writes about it in his *De Natura Animalium* (as published in England in 1565). In Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, a ribald comedy dating from 1624, Estifania remarks "Here comes another trout that I must tickle, / And tickle daintily." Mark Twain wrote about catching catfish (called noodling or guddling) in a similar manner while mentioning that salmon and certain other species can also be lured and caught in this way.

In some US states, hand fishing for monster catfish is called grabbling, graveling, groping, tickling, dogging, hogging or stumping. So why do Okies call it noodling?

Trader-historian James Adair reported American Indians catching catfish with their bare hands as early as 1775. Hand fishing also was practiced in Europe. The technique is handy for poachers. They need no nets, rods, or lines or any other incriminating equipment if apprehended by the police or gamekeepers.

asunder

Asunder means "apart," in separate parts or pieces. "The curtains had been drawn asunder." It can also be used to describe two things that are as vastly far apart as the poles of the Earth.

To understand the word, it helps to take it apart and focus on the "sunder." Asunder comes from the verb sunder, which means "to break apart" or "to become parted, disunited, or severed." It's used figuratively in this phrase: "a community torn asunder by the dispute."



The Lioness and the Fox:

The Fox once observed to the Lioness that Foxes were very much to be envied in the matter of fruitfulness. Scarcely a year passed that she, for instance, did not bring into the world a good litter of cubs, while some who had young only one at a time, and that not more than twice or thrice in their lives, looked down upon everybody else with contempt.

This sneer was too pointed to be passed over in silence by the Lioness, who replied with a good deal of fire, "What you say is true. You have a great many children; but what are they? Foxes. I have only one, but remember that it is a Lion."

(Moral: Prefer quality to quantity.)

fruitful

"Fruitful" means producing fruit or offspring, especially in abundance or simply capable of doing so. Figuratively, it can also mean producing good results or beneficial outcomes.

"Fruit," meaning "offspring, progeny, or child" is from the mid-1200s; that of "any consequence, outcome, or result" is from late 1300s. Meaning "odd person, eccentric" is from 1910; that of "male homosexual" is from 1927. The term also is noted in 1931 as tramp slang for "a girl or woman willing to oblige," probably from the fact of being "easy picking."



The Fighting Cocks:

Two Cocks fought for the sovereignty of the farmyard. One was severely beaten, and ran and hid himself in a hole. The conqueror flew to the top of an outhouse, there clapped his wings, and crowed out "Victory!" Just then an Eagle made a swoop, seized him, and carried him off. The other, seeing this from his hiding-place, came out, and, shaking off the recollection of his late disgrace, strutted about among his Hens with all the dignity imaginable.

(Moral: Bear success with moderation.)

cock

As a noun, "cock" is used in the following ways:

- an adult male bird; a rooster
- a weathervane shaped like a rooster; a weathercock
- a faucet or valve to regulate the flow of a liquid or gas
- the hammer of a firearm
- a tilting or jaunty turn upward: the cock of a hat
- the penis
- a spirited man or boy, often arrogant
- a cone-shaped pile of straw or hay

As a verb, "cock" is used in these ways:

- set the hammer of (a firearm) for firing
- set any device in a position ready for use
- tilt or turn up, usually in a jaunty manner
- raise ready to throw or hit: cocked the bat

More interesting, perhaps, are the words of which "cock" is a part and the idioms that have developed over the centuries.

—a cocker spaniel was trained to start woodcocks (1823)

—cock-and-bull to mean "fictitious" is first recorded 1620s, perhaps an allusion to Aesop's fables, with their incredible talking animals

—go off half-cocked: "speak or act too hastily," an allusion to firearms going off unexpectedly when supposedly secure. Half-cocked in a literal sense "with the cock lifted to the first catch, at which position the trigger does not act" is recorded by 1750. In 1770 it was noted as a synonym for "drunk."

—cock of the walk: one that dominates a group or situation

—cock-of-the-rock: the national bird of Peru

—cock a snook: to thumb one's nose

—poppycock: nonsense, rubbish, empty prattle, or claptrap, and was, in the last century, often used as an exclamation of disagreement

—cocktail: an alcoholic mixed drink; non-alcoholic mixed drinks resembling cocktails are known as "mocktails" or "virgin cocktails"

—cockpit: the entire crew area, or flight deck, of a large airliner; female pilots call it the "box office"

strut

To strut means to walk with a pompous bearing, to swagger, often to show off or attract attention. It can also refer to a structural support used in engineering and construction. A third meaning is to become turgid, to swell.

You can't strut and be shy about it — when you strut, you know people are watching you. The big boss in a gangster film and a model on the runway both know how to strut. To "strut one's stuff" means to display one's best work.

The word comes from Old English *strūtian* meaning to stand out stiffly or

struggle and is akin to Middle High German *strozzzen* meaning to be swollen.



The Miser:

A Miser once buried all his money in the earth, at the foot of a tree, and went every day to feast upon the sight of his treasure. A thievish fellow, who had watched him at this occupation, came one night and carried off the gold. The next day the Miser, finding his treasure gone, tore his clothes and filled the air with his lamentations. A neighbor hearing his outcry and learning the cause said, "Pray do not grieve so; but go and get a stone, place it in the hole, and fancy it is your gold. It will be of quite as much service as the money was." (Nothing is of value that is not of use.)

treasure

As a noun, treasure refers to valuable items, such as money, jewels, or precious metals, that are often hidden or kept in a safe place. It can also mean anything or anyone that is highly valued or cherished, like memories or relationships. It can be anything that someone loves and cherishes. As a verb, to treasure means to keep "in store," as in a safe or in the mind.

The English word treasure comes from the Old French *tresor*, both meaning "something of great worth." Worth is relative, though. What is a treasure to me may be trash to you.

Going back further, we find that the Latin word for treasury is *thesaurus*, which is the name for a book of synonyms. The richness — and worth — of words has always been recognized.



The Dog in the Manger:

A dog was lying in a Manger full of hay. An Ox, being hungry, came near and was going to eat off the hay. The Dog, getting up and snarling at him, would not let him touch it. "Surly creature," said the Ox, "you cannot eat the hay yourself, and yet you will let no one else have any." (Moral: Do not begrudge others what you yourself cannot enjoy.)

manger

A manger is a trough or an open box in which feed for livestock is placed. The word comes from Old French *mangier* meaning "to eat" and from Late Latin *manducare* meaning "to chew, eat," and from *manducus* meaning "glutton." In Middle English, to have "at rack and manger" was an image for

"keep (a mistress, followers, etc.), and supply with life's necessities."



The Two Pots:

A River having overflowed its banks, two Pots were carried along in the stream, one made of Earthenware and the other of Brass. "Well, brother, since we share the same fate, let us go along together," cried the Brazen Pot (who before that had been haughty enough) to the Earthen one.

"No, no!" replied the latter in a great fright; "keep off, whatever you do, for if you knock against me, or I against you, it will be all over with me—to the bottom I shall go."

(Moral: Equals make the best friends.)

earthenware

Earthenware is a type of pottery that is fired at low temperatures, making it slightly porous and often used for decorative and functional items. A ceramic glaze can be applied to make it waterproof. Earthenware is commonly seen in items like flower pots and tableware. Basic earthenware is often called terracotta.

Earthenware comprises most building bricks, nearly all European pottery up to the seventeenth century, most of the wares of Egypt, Persia, and the Mediterranean area, as well as the fine earthenware which forms the greater part of our tableware today. Darker-colored terracotta, typically orange or red due to a comparatively high content of iron oxides, is widely used for flower pots, tiles, and oven ware.

Pit fired earthenware dates back to at least 29,000–25,000 BCE and, for millennia, only earthenware pottery was made, with stoneware beginning to develop some 5,000 years ago.

Despite stoneware and porcelain becoming the most highly valued types of pottery, there are many artistically important types of earthenware. All ancient Greek and Roman pottery is earthenware, as is the Hispano-Moresque ware of the late Middle Ages, which developed into tin-glazed pottery or faience traditions in several parts of Europe, most notably the painted maiolica of the Italian Renaissance, and Dutch Delftware. With a white glaze, these were able to imitate porcelains both from East Asia and Europe.

"Earthen" means made of earth or clay. "Ware" is a collective noun used generally in combination with the name of a material or relating to the use to which products are put, such as: chinaware, tinware, hardware, and tableware.

"Ware" also means manufactured goods or merchandise offered for sale. In the 1300s, it was used in "wild-ware," to mean furs, pelts, and skins of wild animals as a commodity. "Lady-ware" was a jocular 17th century euphemism for a woman's private parts (but sometimes also male sex organs). And Middle English had "ape-ware," meaning deceptive or false ware or tricks.

brazen

"Brazen" has the following meanings:

- made of brass
- the color of polished brass
- having a loud, usually harsh, resonant sound
- rudely bold or shameless: a brazen disregard for rules

A near synonym of brazen is the English word brassy, which has the additional meaning of being loud and showy.

Idioms:

- "Brazen it out" means to face with defiance or impudence.
- To have a "brass neck" (primarily heard in the UK) means to be self-assured, shameless, audacious, or impudent.



The Fox and the Grapes

A hungry Fox one day chanced to come into a vineyard where he saw some fine ripe grapes hanging at a good height from the ground. He jumped at them, and made many other vain attempts to reach them.

Finally he walked off grumbling to himself, "If those grapes had been good, I would be disappointed. But they are green and sour."
(Moral: It is easy to despise what you cannot get.)

grape

A "grape" is a small, sweet fruit that grows in clusters on a vine. Most grapes are either purple or green, and they make a delicious addition to a fruit salad. Dried grapes are known as raisins, currants, or sultanas. This versatile berry is used to make many other products, including jelly, juice, and, most famously, wine. Experts believe the word grape comes from an Old French verb, *graper*, which means "catch with a hook" or "pick grapes off the vine."

The cultivation of grapes began about 8,000 years ago in the Middle East, and the fruit has been used as human food throughout its history. Eaten fresh or dried, grapes are also significant in many parts of the world for their role in winemaking.

Yeast, one of the earliest domesticated microorganisms, occurs naturally on the skins of grapes, leading to the discovery of alcoholic drinks such as wine. The earliest archeological evidence for a dominant position of wine-making in human culture dates from 8,000 years ago in Georgia. The oldest known winery was found in Armenia and dates back around 6000 years.

In 2005, a team of archaeologists concluded that Chalcolithic wine jars discovered in Cyprus in the 1930s dated back to 3500 BCE, making them the oldest of their kind in the world. Commandaria, a sweet dessert wine from Cyprus, is the oldest manufactured wine in the world with origins as far back as 2000 BCE.

In North America, native grapes proliferate in the wild across the continent and were a part of the diet of many Native Americans, but early European colonists considered them to be unsuitable for wine. In the 19th century, the Concord grape was created and became an important agricultural crop in the US.

Words linking to "grape":

"Grappa" refers to brandy distilled from the residue of wine-making.

"Grapeshot" is a cluster of small iron balls or other projectiles, often contained in a canvas bag, that scatter when fired from a cannon, formerly used as an antipersonnel round.

"Grapefruit" presumably originated in Jamaica from chance hybrids between other cultivated citrus. It may have been so called for its taste, or perhaps because it grows in clusters. It was originally called pomelo or shaddock.

sour grapes

The phrase "sour grapes" is an expression of disdain, describing the tendency to disparage something only because it is unattainable. The saying arises from the Aesop fable of the hungry fox, in which the Fox, when he cannot reach the grapes, says they are sour.

If you describe someone's attitude as sour grapes, you mean that they are jealous of another person's success and show it by criticizing that person. "These accusations have been going on for some time now, but it is just sour grapes."

vineyard

A vineyard is a plantation of grape-bearing vines, primarily used for

winemaking, but also for producing raisins, table grapes, and grape juice. The study and practice of vineyard production is known as viticulture and a person who makes or sells wine is called a vintner. The word "vineyard" may also be used to describe a sphere of endeavor, as in "toiled in the vineyard of publishing."

Vineyards are often characterized by their "terroir," a French term loosely translating as "a sense of place" that refers to the specific geographical and geological characteristics of grapevine plantations. The environmental and climatic conditions greatly influence the quality and characteristics of grapes. Vineyards vary in size from small family-run plots to large commercial-scale operations.

The earliest evidence of wine production dates from between 6000 and 5000 BCE. Wine making technology improved considerably with the ancient Greeks but it was not until the end of the Roman Empire that cultivation techniques as we know them were common throughout Europe.

During the lengthy instability of the Middle Ages, monasteries maintained and developed viticultural practices, having the resources, security, stability and interest in improving the quality of their vines. They owned and tended the best vineyards in Europe, and *vinum theologicum* was considered superior to all others.

In vino veritas is a Latin phrase that means "in wine, there is truth," suggesting a person under the influence of alcohol is more likely to speak their hidden thoughts and desires. In the first century CE, Pliny the Elder referred to the common proverb "in wine, there is truth." Similar phrases exist across cultures and languages. The Spanish are more direct, with *los niños y los borrachos dicen la verdad*, meaning "children and drunk people speak the truth."



The Hare and the Tortoise:

The Hare one day laughed at the Tortoise for his short feet, slowness and awkwardness. "Though you may be swift as the wind," replied the Tortoise good-naturedly, "I can beat you in a race."

The Hare looked on the challenge as a great joke, but consented to a trial of speed, and the Fox was selected to act as umpire, and hold the stakes. The rivals started, and the Hare, of course, soon left the Tortoise far behind. Having reached midway to the goal, she began to play about, nibble the young herbage, and amuse herself in many ways. The day being warm, she even thought she would take a little nap in a shady spot, for she thought that if the Tortoise should pass her while she slept, she could easily overtake him again

before he reached the end.

The Tortoise meanwhile plodded on, unwavering and unrelenting, straight towards the goal. The Hare, having overslept, started up from her nap, and was surprised to find that the Tortoise was nowhere in sight.

Off she went at full speed, but on reaching the winning-post, found that the Tortoise was already there, waiting for her arrival.

(Moral: Slow and steady wins the race.)

hare

A hare (also known as a jackrabbit) is a fast-running, herbivorous mammal similar to a large rabbit, belonging to the genus *Lepus*, characterized by long ears and powerful hind legs. Like rabbits, hares have a high libido. Unlike rabbits, hares are usually born fully furred and with their eyes open, allowing them to fend for themselves shortly after birth.

The hare in Aesop's fable may have lost that race due to being too confident, but the long-eared mammal's overall reputation for swiftness remains intact. It's no surprise, then, that hare is used as a verb meaning "to move quickly." The noun hare is a very old word. It first appeared as *hara* in a Latin-Old English glossary around the year 700. The verb was in use by the end of the 1800s, and people have been "haring off" and "haring about" ever since.

The hare in African folk tales is a trickster; some of the stories about the hare were retold among enslaved Africans in America and are the basis of the Br'er Rabbit stories. The hare appears in English folklore in the saying "as mad as a March hare" and in the legend of the White Hare that appears in two versions. One tells of a witch who takes the form of a white hare and goes out looking for prey at night. The other tells of a broken-hearted maiden who cannot rest and who haunts her unfaithful lover.

The hare is also featured in Native American folklore. Hare, or Little Hare, is the culture hero and trickster figure of the central and southern Siouan tribes. In many myths, Hare was created by the Great Spirit specifically to teach humankind; in others, Hare was the grandson of the earth or the son of the west wind.

Related to the word hare is "hare-brained," used to describe a giddy or reckless person. Also related are: harelip, harrier, harum-scarum, and hasenpfeffer (rabbit stew).

tortoise

A tortoise is a reptile with a hard, rounded shell, a type of turtle. While most turtles are excellent swimmers and spend much of their time in the water,

tortoises are full-time land dwellers and slow-moving. Figuratively, a tortoise is a person who moves slowly, a laggard.

Tortoises vary widely in size. Some species, such as the Galápagos giant tortoise, can grow to about 4 feet in length. Others, like the Speckled cape tortoise, have shells that measure a little less than 3 inches long. Tortoises are the longest-living land animals in the world. Galápagos tortoises are noted to live over 150 years, but an Aldabra giant tortoise named Adwaita may have lived close to 255 years.

Tortoises are generally considered to be strict herbivores, feeding on grasses, weeds, leafy greens, flowers, and some fruits. However, hunting and eating of birds has been observed on occasion.

The shell of the tortoise, a mottled pattern of black and gold markings, is used extensively in ornamental work. "Tortoiseshell" is a cat coat coloring named for its similarity to tortoiseshell pattern. Tortoiseshell cats, or torties, combine two colors along with white, either closely mixed or in larger patches. The colors are often described as red and black, but the "red" patches can instead be orange, yellow, or cream, and the "black" can instead be chocolate, gray, tabby, or blue.

The idiom "to turn turtle" means to turn over, to capsize." It also was a method of capturing tortoises.



The City Mouse and the Country Mouse:

A Country Mouse—a plain, sensible sort of fellow—was once visited by a former friend of his, who lived in a neighboring city. The Country Mouse put before his friend some fine peas and wheat-stalks, and called upon him to eat heartily of the good cheer.

The City Mouse nibbled a little here and there in a dainty manner, wondering at the pleasure his host took in such coarse and ordinary fare.

Finally the City Mouse said to his host, in their after-dinner chat, "Really, my good friend, I am surprised that you can keep in such spirits in this dismal, dead-and-alive kind of place. You see here no life, no gayety, no society in short, but go on and on, in a dull, humdrum sort of way, from one year's end to another. Come now with me this very night, and see with your own eyes what a life I lead."

The Country Mouse consented, and as soon as it was dark, off they started for the city, where they arrived just at the end of a splendid supper given by the master of the house where our town friend lived. The City Mouse soon got together a heap of dainties on a corner of the handsome carpet.

The Country Mouse, who had never even heard the names of half the

meats set before him, was hesitating where he should begin, when the room door creaked, opened, and in entered a servant with a light. Off ran the Mice; but everything soon being quiet again, they returned to their repast, when once more the door opened, and the son of the master of the house came running in, followed by his little Terrier, who ran sniffing to the very spot where our friends had just been.

The City Mouse was by that time safe in his hole—which, by the way, he had not been thoughtful enough to show to his friend, who could find no better shelter than that afforded by a sofa, behind which he waited in fear and trembling till quiet was again restored.

The City Mouse then called upon him to resume his supper, but the Country Mouse said, "No, no; I shall be off as fast as I can. I would rather have my wheat-stalk with peace and security, than all your fine things in the midst of such alarms and frights as these."

(Moral: A crust with quietness is better than a feast eaten in fear.)

terrier

A terrier (from Latin *terra* meaning earth) is a type of small, wiry, and fearless dog originally bred to hunt vermin, often known for their digging abilities and lively nature.

There are five different groups of terrier, with each group having different shapes and sizes. Most terriers have short, muscular bodies. There is a lot of variety in the terrier group, though—from fuzzy, 70-pound Airedale terriers to smooth-coated, 25-pound Boston terriers. Terriers were originally bred to hunt small animals like rats and foxes. Terrier comes from the Old French *chien terrier*, or "earth dog," a reference to the terrier's willingness to follow its prey into underground burrows if necessary.

The gameness of the early hunting terriers was exploited by using them in sporting contests. Initially, terriers competed in events such as clearing a pit of rats. The dog that was the fastest in killing all the rats won. In the eighteenth century some terriers were crossed with hounds to improve their hunting, and some with fighting dog breeds to "intensify tenacity and increase courage." Some of the crosses were used in the blood sport of dog-fighting.

Today, most terriers are kept as companion dogs and family pets. They are generally loyal and affectionate to their owners.



The Ape and the Dolphin:

A Ship, wrecked off the coast of Greece, had on board a large Ape, kept for the diversion of the sailors. The ship went down, and the Ape, with most of

the crew, was left struggling in the water. Dolphins are said to have a great friendship for man; and one of these fishes, taking the Ape for a man, came under him, and, supporting him on his back, swam with him to the mouth of the harbor of Piraeus. "In what part of Greece do you live?" demanded the Dolphin.

"I am an Athenian," said the Ape.

"Oh, then, you know Piraeus, of course?" said the Dolphin.

"Know Piraeus!" said the Ape, not wishing to appear ignorant to the Dolphin; "I should rather think I did. Why, my father and he are first cousins."

Thereupon the Dolphin, finding that he was supporting an impostor, slipped from beneath his legs, and left him to his fate.

(Moral: The liar should take care to be well informed.)

ape

An ape is a large, tailless hominoid that includes species like chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans, primarily found in Africa and Southeast Asia. The term can also refer to the act of imitating someone or used to describe a clumsy or boorish person.

The only native apes in Europe are the Barbary apes of Gibraltar, intelligent and docile, and these were the showman's apes of the Middle Ages. Apes were noted in medieval times for mimicry of human action.

Except for gorillas and humans, hominoids are agile climbers of trees. Apes eat some animal foods, but mostly plant foods, such as fruits, leaves, stalks, roots, nuts, and seeds. Human diets are sometimes substantially different from that of other hominoids due in part to the development of technology and a wide range of habitation.

All extant non-human hominoids are rare and threatened with extinction. The main threat is habitat loss, though some populations are further imperiled by hunting. The great apes of Africa are also facing threat from the Ebola virus.

"Ape," from Old English *apa*, is a word of uncertain origin and has a history of rather imprecise usage. Its earliest meaning was generally of any non-human anthropoid primate. Later, after the term "monkey" had been introduced into English, "ape" was specialized to refer to a tailless (therefore exceptionally human-like) primate. Thus, the term "ape" obtained two different meanings: it could be used as a synonym for "monkey" and it could denote the tailless human-like primate in particular.

Related terms are:

—to go ape (emphatic 'go apeshit'): be wildly excited or angry

—ape-man: hypothetical 'missing link' between apes and humans

—jackanapes: William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, was a well-regarded commander during the Hundred Years' War. It was during his dukedom (1448-1450) that England lost its possessions in northern France, and he was accused of treason and banished. His family's coat of arms sported an image of a collar and chain commonly used for leashing pet monkeys. People nicknamed the Duke "Jack Napis," and soon "jackanapes" took on a new life as a word for a cheeky or impudent person and, later, a misbehaving child.



The Leopard and the Fox:

The Leopard one day, in the hearing of the Fox, was very loud in the praise of his own beautifully spotted skin.

The Fox thereupon told him that, hand-some as he might be, he considered that he himself was yet a great deal handsomer. "Your beauty is of the body," said the Fox; "mine is of the mind."

(Moral: Beauty is skin deep.)

leopard

A leopard is a large, territorial wild cat native to Africa and South Asia, known for its distinctive yellowish fur with black spots, although it is occasionally all black. It is an agile and solitary predator, often found in various habitats, from rainforests to savannas. The name also was applied to big cats in the Americas.

The leopard relies on its spotted pattern for camouflage as it stalks and ambushes its prey, which it sometimes drags up a tree. Adults don't associate with each other except during breeding season, but females continue to interact with their offspring even after weaning. They produce a number of vocalizations, including growls and snarls. Cubs call their mother with meows and an urr-urr sound. The most notable vocalization is the 'sawing' roar, which consists of deep, repeated strokes. This likely functions in establishing territories and attracting mates.

Leopards have been featured in art, mythology and folklore of many countries. In Greek mythology, it was a symbol of the god Dionysus, who was depicted wearing leopard skin and using leopards as means of transportation. The Ashanti people used the leopard as a symbol of leadership, and only the king was permitted to have a ceremonial leopard stool.

"Leopard" comes from Late Latin *leopardus*, literally "lion-pard, lion-panther," from *leon* "lion" and *pardos* "male panther." The generic name

Panthera originates in Latin *panthera*, a hunting net for catching wild beasts to be used by the Romans in combats. Pardus is the masculine singular form.

"Leopard" has been paired alliteratively with lamb since the late 1300s. It was used figuratively from c. 1200 of lion-like persons, in an approving sense, "one who is fiercely brave," and a disapproving one, "tyrannical leader, greedy devourer." Related words are "lion-hearted" and "lion's share."

beauty

Beauty is anything that pleases the mind and the senses, like the scent of roasting chicken, the taste of apple pie, the touch of velvet under the fingers, a perfect human figure, or the sound of nine drummers drumming.

One difficulty in understanding beauty is that it has both objective and subjective aspects: it is seen as a property of things but also as depending on the emotional response of observers. Because of its subjective side, beauty is said to be "in the eye of the beholder." Belle found beauty in the Beast, astrologers find beauty in the stars, and arachnologists find beauty in giant hairy spiders.

In the Middle Ages, Catholic philosophers like Thomas Aquinas included beauty among the transcendental attributes of being. In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas described the three conditions of beauty as: *integritas* (wholeness), *consonantia* (harmony and proportion), and *claritas* (a radiance and clarity that makes the form of a thing apparent to the mind).

Beauty was famously defined by Stendhal as *la promesse de bonheur* meaning "the promise of happiness."



The Travelers and the Bear:

Two Men about to journey through a forest agreed to stand by each other in any dangers that might befall. They had not gone far before a savage Bear rushed out from a thicket and stood in their path. One of the Travelers, a light, nimble fellow, got up into a tree. The other, seeing that there was no chance to defend himself singlehanded, fell flat on his face and held his breath. The Bear came up and smelled at him, and taking him for dead, went off again into the wood. The Man in the tree came down and, rejoining his companion, asked him, with a sly smile, what was the wonderful secret which he had seen the Bear whisper into his ear.

"Why," replied the other, "he told me to take care for the future and not to put any confidence in such cowardly rascals as you."

(Moral: Trust not fine promises.)

nimble

If you're nimble, you can move quickly, with ease and agility. That spryness can be both physical and mental, so even if your granny isn't very nimble on her feet, she can probably still whip you in chess.

Nimble, from the 14th century Old English *naemel*, meaning "quick to grasp," can refer to one's mental quickness or physical agility. In the seventeenth century, a talkative person might be called a "nimble-chops."

tree

A tree is a tall, perennial woody plant with a thick trunk and branches that grow from its upper part. The word may also be used to describe something that looks like a tree, such as a diagram or arrangement that shows relationships or a wooden beam, post, stake, or bar used as part of a framework or structure.

The word "tree" is sometimes used as a verb, meaning to force into a difficult position, (Dogs treed the raccoon.) or to cover with trees (The hillside is treed with oaks.) If you're "up a tree," you're in a situation of great difficulty, perhaps helpless. A "tree-nail" (Middle English) was a wooden peg or pin used in ship-building.

Trees consist of a wide variety of plant species that have evolved a trunk as a way to tower above other plants to compete for sunlight. Trees tend to be long-lived, some reaching several thousand years old. They evolved around 400 million years ago, and it is estimated that there are around three trillion mature trees in the world.

A tree typically has many branches supported clear of the ground by the trunk, which typically contains woody tissue for strength, and vascular tissue to carry materials from one part of the tree to another. For most trees the trunk is surrounded by a layer of bark which serves as a protective barrier. Below the ground, roots branch and spread out widely; they serve to anchor the tree and extract moisture and nutrients from the soil. Above ground, the branches divide into smaller branches and shoots. The shoots typically bear leaves, which capture light energy and convert it into sugars by photosynthesis, providing the food for the tree's growth and development.

Trees and forests provide a habitat for many species of animals and plants. Tropical rainforests are among the most biodiverse habitats in the world. Trees provide shade and shelter, timber for construction, fuel for cooking and heating, and fruit for food as well as having many, many other uses.

Trees have been venerated since time immemorial. To the ancient Celts, trees such as the oak, ash and thorn held special significance. In Greek mythology, dryads were believed to be shy nymphs who inhabited trees. In many of the world's religions, a tree is said to link the underworld and the earth and to hold up the heavens. In Norse mythology, Yggdrasil is a central cosmic tree whose roots and branches extend to various worlds. Sacred groves exist in China, India, Africa and elsewhere. They are places where the deities live and where all the living things are either sacred or are companions of the gods.

Do trees communicate with each other? Yes, they do.

According to *The Hidden Life of Trees* (Peter Wohlleben, 2016), trees talk to each other via slow electrical impulses (one-third of an inch per second) and may also use physical senses such as smell and taste. Trees are connected by a web of soil fungi and often by root systems which facilitate nutrient exchange and, very likely, information as well.

Acacia trees pass on an 'alarm signal' to other trees when antelope browse on their leaves, according to a zoologist from Pretoria University. He says that acacias nibbled by antelope produce leaf tannin in quantities lethal to the browsers, and emit ethylene into the air which can travel up to 50 yards. The ethylene warns other trees of the impending danger, which then step up their own production of leaf tannin within just five to ten minutes.

The zoologist, Van Hoven, made his discovery when asked to investigate the sudden death of some 3000 South African antelope, called kudu, on game ranches in the Transvaal. He noticed that giraffe, roaming freely, browsed only on one acacia tree in ten, avoiding those trees which were downwind. Kudu, which are fenced in on the game ranches, have little other than acacia leaves to eat during the winter months. So the antelope continue to browse until the tannin from the leaves sets off a lethal metabolic chain reaction in their bodies.

Again, extensive research in biological chemistry revealed that pheromones from a plant can send out warning signals to other nearby plants of possible infestations by insects. Pine trees are the preferred food for the Mountain Pine Beetle. These insects burrow into the bark of a pine tree and consume the inner bark layer to attain nutrients and lay their eggs. Mountain Pine Beetles emit pheromones which tell others to come to the area, leading to infestations in a relatively short period of time. What baffled the researchers initially was the observation that trees in the general area of an infestation were seen to produce an over-abundant amount of sap even if they were free of Mountain Pine Beetles. The sap production is believed to be the defensive mechanism of pine trees to drown and eradicate the insects feasting off their interior bark.

The instructions for almost all living things come from DNA. In fact, the actual structure of the DNA molecule and how it codes for proteins, for example, is the same from bacteria to yeast to plants and animals. Functions that are unique to a plant or animal have unique proteins, but proteins that do the same things in many organisms have similar instructions or DNA sequences. It has been estimated by scientists that the DNA of a tree is 60% similar to that of a human.

A final word from Donald Culross Peattie (1898 - 1964), American botanist and writer:

"Sequoias: Five thousand years of living, twelve million pounds of growth out of a tiny seed. Three hundred vertical feet of growth, up which the water travels every day dead against gravity from deep in the great root system."

trust

"Trust" refers to the belief in the reliability, integrity, truth, or ability of someone or something. It can also describe a legal arrangement where one person holds property or cares for a child for the benefit of another.

Trust takes many forms. You could trust in something abstract, like luck or the idea that things happen for a reason. If you are naïve, people might take advantage of your trust. A trust can also be a fund or an alliance meant to take care of something. A wildlife trust saves land from development so animals can live there. A merchant selling on credit expects that he will be paid.

Caution is necessary, though. As an Arabic proverb says, "He gives advice such as a cat gives to a mouse."



Aesop's Food for Thought

Too much belief is worse than too little.

The Eagle, The Cat, and The Sow

Youth and folly often live together.

The Wanton Calf

Know those whom you would serve.

The Wolf and The Crane

Catch at the shadow and you lose the substance.

The Dog and His Shadow

It is wise to see one's way out before one ventures in.

The Fox and The Sick Lion

Guard against those who would wish you to be reduced to their own level.

The Fox Without a Tail

Do not begrudge others what you yourself cannot enjoy.

The Dog in The Manger

Appearances are deceptive.

The Ant and the Chrysalis

Necessity is the mother of invention.

The Crow and the Pitcher

Do not count your chickens before they are hatched.

The Milkmaid and Her Pail

Every man should be content to mind his own business.

The Seagull and the Kite



The Apothecary Rose

The Apothecary Rose (Owen Archer mystery #1), by Candace Robb, is a fourteenth century detective novel set in the city of York in England.

It's Christmastide 1363 and, at an abbey in York, two pilgrims die mysteriously of an herbal remedy. Suspicious, the Archbishop sends for Owen Archer, a Welshman with the charm of the devil, who's lost one eye to the wars in France and must make a new career as an honest spy.

Masquerading as an apprentice to Apothecary Nicholas Wilton, whose shop dispensed the fatal potion, Owen is intrigued by Lucie, who is not only Wilton's wife and shop assistant, but also his apprentice. Is she a murderess as well? What links the Wiltons to bumbling Brother Wulfstan, ascetic Archdeacon Anselm and his weaselly agent Potter Digby, who is a summoner and son of the ragged midwife Magda the Riverwoman? Answers as slippery as the frozen cobblestones draw Owen into a dangerous drama of old scandals and tragedies, obsession, and unholy love.

Owen uncovers troubling links between the poisoned knight and others close to Nicholas — including Lucie, who has captured his heart. But is he falling in love with a killer?

One review describes the story as follows: "The best aspects of this book were its quality writing, its portrayal of daily life in medieval York, the exposition of the 'rules' that applied to the different social strata of the period, and the interwoven political and ecclesiastical intrigues that motivated the power brokers in the story."

About the Author:

Candace Robb did her graduate work in medieval literature and history, and has continued to study the period while working first as an editor of scientific publications and now for some years as a freelance writer. She has published 17 crime novels set in 14th century England, Wales, and Scotland. Writing as Emma Champion, Candace has published other historical novels.

Candace was born in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, and has lived most of her adult life in Seattle, Washington, which she and her husband love for its combination of natural beauty and culture. Candace enjoys walking, hiking, and gardening, and practices yoga and vipassana meditation. She travels frequently to Great Britain.

Excerpts from the Author's Note:

Writing a historical mystery novel requires the author to wear three hats, novelist, historian, and mystery writer.

The novelist guards the integrity of the form, the growth of the main character, and glories in the creation of the character's world, freely using the imagination. But the historian groans at anachronisms, agonizes over chronologies, and corrects descriptions according to archeological studies from city plans to the heights of the people. The mystery writer doesn't want too much superfluous historical description to confuse the clues, has to postpone some of the revelations of the novelist in order to maintain suspense, and yearns to move things around in time and place to serve the mystery. Compromises must be made in order to finish the book in one's lifetime.

England in the reign of Edward III (1327-1377) was an exciting, dangerous place. Change was in the air, as momentous as a stronger Commons voice in Parliament and as frivolous as the greatest advances in fashions in centuries. The proud, ambitious son of a deposed king and a ruthlessly ambitious queen, Edward embroiled his country and France in a war that would drag on intermittently from 1337 to 1453, at first in an effort to save the last piece of the Plantagenet empire in France, Gascony, but later as the self-proclaimed "King of England and France." His constant requests to Parliament for new taxes to finance the war led to the stronger voice of the Commons; the wealth brought by the spoils of the war led to the frivolity of fashions.

This long war was fought on French soil, particularly in the north of France. In the book, Lucie's mother, Amelie D'Arby, is the daughter of a Norman noble whose land was so devastated by the armies that he could not raise the money for his ransom. He offered his marriageable daughter to Sir Robert D'Arby instead. She was brought to Yorkshire while still in shock over the horrors of living in a war zone. She had seen her brother's head on a pike, watched a schoolmate raped and murdered by an English soldier, and was now wed to the enemy and brought to a country in which Norman French was being replaced by English.



People and Places

John Thoresby

John of Thoresby (died 1373) was an English clergyman and politician, who climbed the religious political ladder to become Archbishop of York. He was also Lord Chancellor of England under King Edward III starting from 1349, and in 1355, a Warden of the Cinque Ports and a regent of the kingdom during

Edward III's absence.

York was not, at this time, in a satisfactory condition. The highest offices in York Minster had been, since the commencement of the fourteenth century, in the hands of the Roman Cardinals, who were, of course, non-resident. Order and discipline were consequently lacking both in the church and the rest of the diocese.

John set himself to remedy these problems as best he might. He also settled the great differences between the sees of York and Canterbury and undertook much building work at York Minster. He was buried before the altar of the Virgin in the Lady Chapel, the "novum opus chori," which he had constructed.

York

York is a cathedral city in North Yorkshire, England, with Roman origins, sited at the confluence of the rivers Ouse and Foss.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Mesolithic people settled in the region of York between 8000 and 7000 BCE. By the time of the Roman conquest of Britain in the first century CE, the area was occupied by a tribe known as the Brigantes. The Romans founded the city under the name of Eboracum in 71 CE, its name derived from Brittonic *Eburākon*: "place of yew trees."

The town was victim to occasional flooding from the Rivers Ouse and Foss, and the population suffered accordingly. After the Romans left, York was taken and settled by the Angles in the 5th century CE. In the Middle Ages, it became the northern England ecclesiastical province's center, and also grew as a wool-trading center.

In 866, the Vikings raided and captured York, by then a thriving Anglo-Saxon metropolis and prosperous economic hub. The city became the capital of Viking territory in Britain, and at its peak boasted more than 10,000 inhabitants. This was a population second only to London within Great Britain. Under Viking rule the city became a major river port, part of the extensive Viking trading routes throughout northern Europe. The last ruler, Eric Bloodaxe, was driven from the city in 954 by King Eadred in his successful attempt to complete the unification of England.

In 1068, two years after the Norman conquest of England, the people of York rebelled. Initially they succeeded, but upon the arrival of William the Conqueror the rebellion was put down. In the 12th century, York, through its location on the River Ouse and its proximity to the Great North Road, became again a major trading center and a major cloth manufacturing and trading center.

Today, the city center is still within the walls, but the city spreads out beyond them. In the 14th century, it was the unfortunates who lived outside the walls. The Forest of Galtres to the north was the haunt of thieves, there were roving bands of outlaws on the roads, and it was a practice in the Middle Ages to burn the "vermin cities" and other shanty communities that grew up outside the city walls in preparation for defense. Though the population rose, the physical dimensions of a city remained the same, causing crowding and taxing the sanitation systems beyond their limits.

York was an important ecclesiastical center. The church wielded enormous power in the 14th century. In York alone there were 10 religious houses, 47 churches, 16 chapels, and the cathedral. York was the seat of the second most powerful Churchman in England, the Archbishop of York. England was divided into two metropolitan provinces, Canterbury and York. In the story, when Abbot Campian and Archbishop Thoresby discuss Owen's inquiries over a flagon of wine, two great men are protecting their considerable interests.

In fact, they were lords of their own "liberties" in York. Although the city had a mayor and two councils, there were areas of the city under separate rule, called liberties.

York Castle was one such liberty. Abbot Campian was lord of the liberty of St. Mary's, and Archbishop Thoresby was lord of the liberty of St. Peter's, or York Minster. Each liberty had jurisdiction for crimes committed in it and contained its own courthouse, jail, and gallows. Hence, in the story, the deaths at the abbey occurred in Abbot Campian's jurisdiction, and Thoresby's inquiries were intrusive.

Norman

A Norman was, circa 1200 CE, "an inhabitant of Normandy; one of the mixed Scandinavian-Frankish people who conquered England in 1066." The word literally means "North man," from a Scandinavian word.

The Norman Conquest was the 11th-century invasion (September 28, 1066) and occupation of England by an army made up of thousands of Norman, French, Flemish, and Breton troops, all led by the Duke of Normandy, later styled William the Conqueror.

The lands of the resisting English elite were confiscated; some of them fled into exile. To control his new kingdom, William granted lands to his followers and built castles commanding military strong points throughout the land. The Domesday Book, a manuscript record of the "Great Survey" of much of

England and parts of Wales, was completed by 1086. Other effects of the conquest included the court and government, the introduction of a dialect of French as the language of the elites, and changes in the composition of the upper classes. The main change appears to have been the formal elimination of slavery, which may or may not have been linked to the invasion. There was little alteration in the structure of government, as the new Norman administrators took over many of the forms of Anglo-Saxon government.

One of the most obvious effects of the conquest was the introduction of Anglo-Norman, a northern dialect of Old French with limited Nordic influences, as the language of the ruling classes in England, displacing Old English. Norman French words entered the English language, and a further sign of the shift was the usage of names common in France instead of Anglo-Saxon names. Male names such as William, Robert, and Richard soon became common; female names changed more slowly. The demands of trade and basic communication probably meant that at least some of the Normans and native English were bilingual. Nevertheless, William the Conqueror never developed a working knowledge of English and for centuries afterwards English was not well understood by the nobility.



Words and Phrases

aconite

"First it had tingled, then had gone numb. With just a fingertip's worth of the physick.

Enough aconite to kill by applying a salve."

Aconite, also known as wolfsbane and monkshood, is any of various usually poisonous perennial herbs of the genus *Aconitum* in the buttercup family. These herbs have tuberous roots, palmately lobed leaves, and blue, purple, or white flowers with a large hoodlike upper sepal. The dried leaves and roots of some of these plants yield a poisonous alkaloid that was formerly used medicinally to relieve pain.

apothecary

An apothecary is one who prepares and sells drugs and other medicines to physicians, surgeons and patients, a pharmacist. The word originates from the Latin word *apotheca* for "storehouse." The modern terms pharmacist and chemist have largely taken over this role, though apothecary is still used in some places.

The words bodega and boutique don't look like *apotheca*, but they are all related both in meaning and in origin. Each can be traced back to the Latin word for "storehouse" and each one refers in English to a retail establishment. Although bodega initially meant "a storehouse for wine," it now usually refers to a grocery store. Boutique was and is "a small retail store" but it now may also refer to "a small company that offers highly specialized products or services."

The profession of apothecary can be dated back at least to 2600 BCE to ancient Babylon, which provides one of the earliest records of the practice of the apothecary. Clay tablets have been found with medical texts recording symptoms, prescriptions, and the directions for compounding. The Papyrus Ebers from ancient Egypt, written around 1500 BCE, contain a collection of more than 800 prescriptions. It lists over 700 different drugs.

Apothecaries' investigation of herbal and chemical ingredients was a precursor to the modern sciences of chemistry and pharmacology. In addition to dispensing herbs and medicine, apothecaries offered general medical advice and a range of services that are now performed by other specialist practitioners, such as surgeons and obstetricians.

Of course, there were ongoing tensions between apothecaries and other medical professions. Often women (who were prohibited from entering medical school) became apothecaries, which took away business from male physicians. In 1865 Elizabeth Garrett Anderson became the first woman to be licensed to practice medicine in Britain by passing the examination of the Society of Apothecaries. By the end of the 19th century, the medical professions had taken on their current institutional form, with defined roles for physicians and surgeons, and the role of the apothecary was more narrowly conceived, as that of pharmacist (dispensing chemist in British English).

Apothecaries dispensed vials of poisons as well as medicines. Protective methods to prevent accidental ingestion of poisons included the use of specially-shaped containers for potentially poisonous substances such as laudanum.

Apothecary businesses were typically family-run, and wives or other women of the family worked alongside their husbands in the shops, learning the trade themselves. In the Medieval era, women were not allowed to be educated in universities, so apprenticing as apothecaries allowed them a chance to be trained in medical knowledge and healing.

Many recipes for medicines included herbs, minerals, and pieces of animals (meats, fats, skins) that were ingested, made into paste for external use, or used as aromatherapy. Some of these are similar to natural remedies used

today, including catnip, chamomile, fennel, mint, garlic, and witch hazel. Many other ingredients used in the past such as urine, fecal matter, earwax, human fat, and saliva, are no longer used and are generally considered ineffective or unsanitary. Trial and error were the main source for finding successful remedies, as little was known about the chemistry of why certain treatments worked. For instance, it was known that drinking coffee could help cure headaches, but the existence and properties of caffeine itself was still a mystery.

apprentice

An apprentice is a beginner, a learner, one bound by legal agreement to work for another for a specific amount of time in return for instruction in a trade, art, or business.

In the old days, becoming an apprentice was the only way to get into many lines of work. Nowadays it's thought of more in terms of trades — butchers, bakers, bricklayers, etc. If the same thing is done in an office setting, it's usually called an internship, but the idea is the same — learning by watching an expert. The word can be used as either a noun or verb: You are an apprentice, but you also can apprentice to the barber down the street.

bleed

"Owen wondered how long Michael's poison would linger in Wulfstan's body, and whether the novice Henry had thought to bleed the old monk."

To bleed is to emit or lose blood or to have blood drawn from one.

The word is also used figuratively:

- to express grief: "My heart bleeds for the victims of the air crash."
- to seep: "The dye accidentally bled into another garment."
- to extort money from, especially over a prolonged period

bloodletting

"The spring bloodletting is coming up. It is always quiet before that."

Bloodletting was based on an ancient system of medicine in which blood and other bodily fluids were regarded as "humors" that had to remain in proper balance to maintain health. It was the most common medical practice from antiquity for over 2,000 years.

It was thought that blood carried the vital force of the body and was the seat

of the soul; body weakness and insanity were ascribed to a defect in this vital fluid.

In Greece, bloodletting was in use in the 5th century BCE during the lifetime of Hippocrates, who mentions this practice but generally relied on dietary techniques. Erasistratus, however, theorized that many diseases were caused by plethoras, or overabundances, in the blood and advised that these plethoras be treated, initially, by exercise, sweating, reduced food intake, and vomiting.

"Bleeding" a patient to health was modeled on the process of menstruation. Hippocrates believed that menstruation functioned to "purge women of bad humors." During the Roman Empire, the Greek physician Galen, who subscribed to the teachings of Hippocrates, advocated physician-initiated bloodletting.

Most bloodletters would open a vein in the arm, leg or neck with a small, fine knife called a fleam or lancet. They would tie off the area with a tourniquet and, holding the lancet between thumb and forefinger, strike into the vein. They would collect the blood in measuring bowls, often exquisitely wrought of fine Venetian glass.

Bleeding was as trusted and popular in ancient days as aspirin is today. The Talmudic authors laid out complex laws for bloodletting. Medieval monks bled each other several times a year for general maintenance of health. Doctors devised elaborate charts indicating the most favorable astrological conditions for bleeding.

There were two key concepts in Galen's system of bloodletting. The first was that blood was created and then used up; it did not circulate, and so it could "stagnate" in the extremities. The second was that humoral balance was the basis of illness or health, the four humors being blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile, relating to the four Greek classical elements of air, water, earth, and fire respectively. Galen believed that blood was the dominant humor and the one in most need of control. In order to balance the humors, a physician would either remove "excess" blood from the patient or give them an emetic to induce vomiting, or a diuretic to induce urination.

Galen created a complex system of how much blood should be removed based on the patient's age, constitution, the season, the weather and the place. He linked different blood vessels with different organs, according to their supposed drainage. For example, the vein in the right hand would be bled for liver problems and the vein in the left hand for problems with the spleen. The more severe the disease, the more blood would be let. Fevers required copious amounts of bloodletting.

Galen was able to propagate his ideas through the force of personality and the power of the pen; his total written output exceeds two million words. He had an extraordinary effect on medical practice and his teaching persisted for many centuries. His ideas and writings were disseminated by several physicians in the Middle Ages when bloodletting became accepted as the standard treatment for many conditions.

In the Middle Ages, the Talmud recommended a specific day of the week and days of the month for bloodletting and similar rules, though less codified, can be found among Christian writings advising which saints' days were favorable for bloodletting. During medieval times bleeding charts were common, showing specific bleeding sites on the body in alignment with the planets and zodiacs.

Though the bloodletting was often recommended by physicians, it was carried out by barbers. This led to the distinction between physicians and surgeons. The red-and-white-striped pole of the barbershop, still in use today, is derived from this practice: the red symbolizes blood while the white symbolizes the bandages. Bloodletting was used to "treat" a wide range of diseases, becoming a standard treatment for almost every ailment.

William Harvey (1578 – 1657) was an English physician who made influential contributions to anatomy and physiology. He was the first known physician to describe completely, and in detail, pulmonary and systemic circulation as well as the specific process of blood being pumped to the brain and the rest of the body by the heart. He disproved the basis of the practice of bloodletting in 1628, but it took another 300 years for the medical profession to accept it.

One typical course of medical treatment began the morning of 13 July 1824. A French sergeant was stabbed through the chest while engaged in single combat; within minutes, he fainted from loss of blood. Arriving at the local hospital he was immediately bled twenty ounces "to prevent inflammation." During the night he was bled another 24 ounces. Early the next morning, the chief surgeon bled the patient another 10 ounces; during the next 14 hours, he was bled five more times. Medical attendants thus intentionally removed more than half of the patient's normal blood supply—in addition to the initial blood loss which caused the sergeant to faint. Bleedings continued over the next several days. By 29 July, the wound had become inflamed. The physician applied 32 leeches to the most sensitive part of the wound. Over the next three days, there were more bleedings and a total of 40 more leeches. Amazingly, the sergeant recovered and was discharged on 3 October. His physician wrote that "by the large quantity of blood lost, amounting to 170 ounces (nearly eleven pints), besides that drawn by the application of leeches (perhaps another two pints), the life of the patient was preserved." By nineteenth-

century standards, thirteen pints of blood taken over the space of a month was a large but not an exceptional quantity. The medical literature of the period contains many similar accounts, some successful, some not.

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English write that the popularity of bloodletting and heroic medicine in general was because of a need to justify medical billing. Traditional healing techniques had been mostly practiced by women within a non-commercial family or village setting. As male doctors suppressed these techniques, they found it difficult to quantify various "amounts" of healing to charge for, and difficult to convince patients to pay for it. Because bloodletting seemed active and dramatic, it helped convince patients the doctor had something tangible to sell.

brigand

"Your accent will worry the folk who think all who speak oddly are Scots brigands."

A "brigand" is a lawless fellow who lives by plunder; one of a band of robbers; especially, one of a gang living in mountain retreats, a highwayman, a freebooter.

camp fever

"Released from the Black Prince's service because of wounds and a bout with camp fever, the man had resolved to come on pilgrimage to York, his wounds making him more aware of his mortality than any sermon ever had."

"Camp fever" is a form of typhus so named because the disease often causes epidemics following wars and natural disasters where civil life is disrupted. Epidemic typhus is spread to people through contact with infected body lice; endemic typhus is usually transmitted by fleas. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, confusion, cough, body aches, rash, nausea, and vomiting.

Though typhus has been responsible for millions of deaths throughout history, it is still considered a rare disease that occurs mainly in populations that suffer unhygienic extreme overcrowding. Typhus is most rare in industrialized countries. Untreated typhus cases have a fatality rate of approximately 40%.

The Plague of Athens, which occurred during the second year of the Peloponnesian War (430 BCE), is assumed to have been caused by typhus. That assumption is supported by both medical and scholarly opinions.

The first reliable description of the disease appears during the siege of the

Emirate of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs in 1489 during the Granada War. These accounts include descriptions of fever and red spots over arms, back and chest, progressing to delirium, gangrenous sores, and the stench of rotting flesh. During the siege, the Catholics lost 3,000 men to enemy action, but an additional 17,000 died of typhus.

Typhus was also common in prisons (and in crowded conditions where lice spread easily), where it was known as jail fever. Imprisonment until the next term of court was often equivalent to a death sentence. Typhus was so infectious that prisoners brought before the court sometimes infected the court itself. Following the Black Assize of Oxford 1577, over 510 died from epidemic typhus. The outbreak that followed, between 1577 and 1579, killed about 10% of the English population.

cast

"Since the attempted poisoning, there was a vague cast to the old Infirmarian's eyes, as though his thoughts were fixed on the next life."

"Cast" is a very flexible word. As a verb, it can mean to:

- throw something (dice at the craps table)
- put forth (cast a fishing line)
- deposit a ballot (cast your vote)
- get rid of (cast off)
- shed, molt
- perform arithmetical operations on
- dispose or arrange into parts
- choose actors for roles in a theatrical production
- give shape to a substance by pouring, in liquid or plastic form, into a mold and letting harden without pressure

As a noun, a "cast" may mean the plaster cast on a broken leg or the actors in a play or television show.

In the case of a "cast in the eye," it can mean a "slight strabismus or squint." A "strabismus" is a visual defect (cross-eye) in which one eye cannot focus with the other on an object because of imbalance of the eye muscles. It can also mean "a turning of the eye in a particular direction." Then again, it may simply mean "expression," as used by Nathaniel Hawthorne in, "this freakish, elfish cast came into the child's eye."

colonia

"While the Roman colonia and fortress were on high ground, by 400

CE the town (York) was victim to occasional flooding from the Rivers Ouse and Foss."

The Latin word "colonia" derives from the verb "colonare," meaning "to cultivate." It translates to "colony" in English, referring to a settlement established by people from a parent country in a new territory, maintaining the ties of cultural, social, or political origin.

In North America, the word means a shantytown inhabited mainly by speakers of Spanish and located near the US border with Mexico.

common weal

"I am the Archbishop of York and Lord Chancellor of England.
Good and evil I must judge in the light of the common weal."

The "common weal" (now spelled "commonweal") in philosophy, economics, and political science, means the public good or welfare.

Early conceptions of the common good were set out by Ancient Greek philosophers, including Aristotle and Plato. The application of the concept differs significantly among philosophical doctrines, as it sometimes does today among political parties.

delicious

"Delicious" means highly pleasing or agreeable to the senses, especially of taste or smell. If you're a chocolate fanatic, you will probably find triple chocolate fudge cake to be absolutely delicious.

The origins of "delicious" make perfect sense. The late Latin *deliciae* means "delight" or "pleasure," so you could say that delicious flavors and delicious foods give delight or pleasure to our taste buds. But things that delight your intellect can be delicious as well, especially when you're entertained by art, amused by wit, or delighted by irony. Thinking of the perfect comeback to an insult can be a particularly delicious experience.

dour

"A dour-faced cleric led Owen to the Archbishop's chambers, after attempts to direct him failed."

The word "dour" means stern, harsh, obstinate, gloomy, and sour in aspect.

Dour, which is etymologically related to duress and endure, traditionally rhymes with tour. The pronunciation that rhymes with sour is a standard

variant that has been in use for more than a century.

essential oils

"Essential oils" are any of a class of volatile oils that give plants their characteristic odors and are used especially in perfumes and flavorings, and for aromatherapy. An essential oil is essential only in the sense that it contains the essence of the plant's fragrance.

Essential oils are generally extracted by distillation, often by using steam, although other processes are sometimes used, including cold pressing. Most citrus peel oils are expressed mechanically or cold-pressed (similar to olive oil extraction). Oils are used in perfumes, cosmetics, soaps, air fresheners and other products, for flavoring food and drink, and for adding scents to incense and household cleaning products.

Such oils are often used for aromatherapy, a form of alternative medicine in which healing effects are ascribed to aromatic compounds. Aromatherapy may be useful to induce relaxation, but there isn't sufficient evidence that it can effectively treat any condition. Improper use of essential oils may cause harm including allergic reactions, inflammation and skin irritation. Essential oils can be poisonous if ingested or absorbed through the skin.

Most common essential oils such as lavender, peppermint, tea tree oil, patchouli, and eucalyptus are distilled. Raw plant material, consisting of the flowers, leaves, wood, bark, roots, seeds, or peel, is put into an alembic (distillation apparatus) over water. As the water is heated, the steam passes through the plant material, vaporizing the volatile compounds. The vapors flow through a coil, where they condense back to liquid, which is then collected in the receiving vessel.

The recondensed water is referred to as a hydrosol, hydrolat, herbal distillate, or plant water essence, which may be sold as another fragrant product. Hydrosols include rose water, lavender water, lemon balm, clary sage, and orange blossom water.

Before the discovery of distillation, all essential oils were extracted by pressing. The resins of aromatics and plant extracts were retained to produce traditional medicines and scented preparations, such as perfumes and incense, including frankincense, myrrh, cedarwood, juniper berry and cinnamon.

everyman

"But as far as I know he came as a nameless pilgrim, an everyman."

An "everyman" is a typical or ordinary person representative of humanity, an ordinary man representative of all men. Our modern nicknames include John Doe and Joe Blow.

The everyman is a stock character of fiction. An ordinary and humble character, the everyman is generally a protagonist whose benign conduct fosters the audience's identification with him.

Although the everyman may face the same difficulties that a hero might, archetypal heroes react rapidly and vigorously, whereas an everyman typically avoids engagement until the situation demands action to avert disaster.

Fortune

"Fortune smiled on you when he gave you a living you could keep into old age, Tom."

"Fortune" is a hypothetical, often personified force or power that favorably or unfavorably governs the events of one's life.

Fortuna was the Roman goddess of fate and luck. She was sometimes depicted with a wheel, and the random spinning of her "wheel of fortune" became a symbol for the unpredictability of fate. A fortune teller can look into her crystal ball or tarot cards and predict your future. But her predictions are probably about as accurate as the "prophecy" that comes inside your fortune cookie.

gone up the table

"He came after you'd gone up the table."

This sentence probably has to do with the idiom "above the salt." In medieval times, being seated at a dining table "above the salt" meant you were of a high standing, rank, regard, or repute. The term is derived from the social hierarchy of nobility, in which salt, a precious commodity then, was set in the middle of the dining table. Those of high noble rank were seated "above the salt," that is, closer to the lord and lady of the house, while those in lower social standing were seated "below" it.

gullet

"Gullet" is another name for the esophagus, the organ that food passes through on its way to the stomach. When you eat a cupcake, it moves from your mouth to your pharynx, and then to your gullet.

The gullet is an important part of your digestive system, linking your mouth

and stomach, and also one of the earliest steps in the digestive process. Muscles in the gullet contract and relax, helping to push food along, a process that's called peristalsis. Gullet comes from the Old French *golet*, "neck of a bottle," from the Latin *gula*, "throat."

Oddly enough, "gullet" also means the space between the tips of adjacent saw teeth.

journeyman

"For, capable as Mistress Lucie Wilton is, she's still not a master, though with a few more months of handling the shop alone, she could make journeyman."

A "journeyman" is one who has fully served an apprenticeship in a trade or craft and is a qualified worker in someone's employ.

The term "journeyman" was originally used in the medieval trade guilds. Journeymen were paid daily and the word "journey" is derived from *journée*, meaning "whole day" in French. Each individual guild generally recognized three ranks of workers: apprentices, journeymen, and masters. A journeyman, as a qualified tradesman, could become a master and run his own business, but most continued working as employees.

Guilds put guidelines in place to promote responsible tradesmen, who were held accountable for their own work and to protect the individual trade and the general public from unskilled workers. To become a master, a journeyman had to submit a master piece of work to a guild for evaluation. Only after evaluation could a journeyman be admitted to the guild as a master.

liege

A "liege" is a lord or sovereign to whom allegiance and service are due, according to feudal law.

In other words, a term used by underlings for the lord of their land. The word was probably of Germanic origin, derived from the Medieval Latin *laeticus*. The word is not used much today, except in jest.

Capitalized, the word becomes Liege, a city of eastern Belgium near the Dutch and German borders. First mentioned in 558 CE, it was a noted intellectual center in the Middle Ages.

lovage

"Lucie was listening to Tildy repeat the ingredients for tomorrow's

soup pot. 'Not fennel, Tildy, lovage.'"

Lovage is a tall aromatic perennial plant of the carrot family. It has been long cultivated in Europe and the leaves are used as a herb, the roots as a vegetable, and the seeds as a spice, especially in southern European cuisine. It was sometimes cultivated for use in medicine, especially as a diuretic. Its flavor and smell are reminiscent both of celery and parsley, only more intense and spicier than either. The seeds can be used in the same way as fennel seeds.

The name "lovage" is from "love-ache," ache being a medieval name for parsley. A recommendation to cultivate lovage on the agricultural properties of Charlemagne appears in chapter 70 of *Capitulare de villis*, a text written around 800 CE about the maintenance of royal estates.

mandragora

"If you are his friend, leave him in peace. He had a spell, requiring mandragora to relieve the pain. He must sleep now."

Mandragora is a narcotic, short-stemmed European plant, *Mandragora officinarum*, of the nightshade family, having a fleshy, often forked root somewhat resembling a human form and known as mandrake root.

In Greek mythology, Circe and Aphrodite are thought to use it as an aphrodisiac. But, as a member of the nightshade plant family, mandrake contains hallucinogenic and narcotic alkaloids. Dioscurides, a first-century Greek physician, tells us that a winecupful of mandrake root (that is, mandrake root boiled in wine) was used as an anesthetic in ancient Rome. But be careful, he warns—take too much, and one might end up dead.

Juice from the finely grated root was also applied externally to relieve rheumatic pains. It was used internally to treat melancholy, convulsions, and mania. When taken internally in large doses, it was said to excite delirium and madness.

Over the centuries, legends surrounding the mandrake's different sexes and human shape grew stronger, reinforced by the medieval doctrine of signatures, which claimed that plants that resembled certain body parts could be used to treat ailments of those body parts. As a plant with the shape of a human body, the mandrake was believed able to induce love or conception, or bring good fortune, wealth and power. A mandrake root, shaped like a baby and slipped underneath one's pillow, could help a woman conceive. Or, shaped like a woman and carried in one's pocket, could help a man secure his desired lover. Across Europe, men and women desperately sought out mandrake root to

resolve their woes, and fraudsters counterfeited them out of carved bryony root to satisfy the growing demand.

The ages-old legend of the shrieking mandrake, as portrayed in the world of Harry Potter, holds that a mandrake will emit an ear-piercing scream if uprooted, killing the person who digs it up. According to the stories, the only way to uproot the mandrake safely is to plug one's ears with wax, and tie a rope between a mandrake root and a dog's tail. Back away from the root and throw the dog a treat, and the dog will lunge for it. The mandrake root will be uprooted by the dog's sudden leap, and its shrieks will kill the hungry dog. The mandrake-hunter can then unplug his or her ears and continue the hunt in peace—as long as there's an ample supply of dogs.

minster

"Minster" is an honorific title given to particular churches in England. The cathedral of St. Peter in York is referred to as York Minster.

The word minster (Old English *mynster*) was a rendering of the Latin *monasterium*, from Greek *monasterion*. In early English sources, *monasterium* and *mynster* were used interchangeably. They were applied to all communities who had devoted their lives to Christian observance, regardless of the gender of the occupants or the activities in which said occupants typically engaged.

In the earliest days of the English Church, from the 6th to the 8th centuries, minsters, in their various forms, constituted the only form of Christian institution with a permanent site. At the beginning of the period, they were the only form of permanent collective settlement in a culture that had not developed towns or cities. Kings, nobles and bishops were continually on the move, with their respective retinues, from estate to estate.

Widespread in 10th-century England, minsters declined in importance with the systematic introduction of parishes and parish churches from the 11th century onwards. The term continued as a title of dignity in later medieval England, for instances where a cathedral, monastery, collegiate church, or parish church had originated with an Anglo-Saxon foundation.

motte

"In 1068, two years after the Norman conquest of England, the people of York rebelled. Initially they succeeded but, upon the arrival of William the Conqueror, the rebellion was put down. William at once built a wooden fortress on a motte."

A motte, in general terms, is a clump of trees on a prairie. In the Middle Ages, however, it meant a mound or a flat-topped hill, often made artificially, on which was built a wooden or stone defensive structure.

mute

The word "mute," as an adjective, means "silent." No matter how much you talk to your houseplants, they'll never talk back; they'll remain mute. Of course, they may make a mute appeal for water by drooping.

A person who is mute may be refraining from producing vocal sound, or may be unable to speak. A synonym is "dumb." A use for the word in law is "refusing to plead directly."

When used as a noun, mute can mean "someone who isn't capable of speech" or "a device that deadens the sound of an instrument." Mute can also be used as a verb meaning "to make silent." One might mute the television by pressing a button on the remote, or one might try to mute a loquacious individual. Unfortunately, the technology for that last option doesn't exist yet.

mystery

A mystery is something with hidden meaning which baffles our understanding. More specifically, any of the following:

- an unexplained or inexplicable event
- a person or thing with an obscure or puzzling nature
- anything artfully made difficult or enigmatic
- a story about crime (usually murder)
- religious truth via divine revelation
- a secret religious rite believed to impart enduring bliss
- in Christianity a sacramental rite
- a religious cult practicing secret rites to which only initiates are admitted, such as the Eleusinian and Mithraic mystery cults
- a secret rite of such a cult
- (archaic) a trade, handicraft, or art

The noun "mystery" comes originally from the Greek *mysterion*, meaning "secret rite or doctrine." A great synonym for secret is enigma. We use this word all the time to describe stuff we don't understand, from crop circles and UFOs to the origins of the universe and the workings of the human brain.

Two apt additional uses for the word, which probably arose in WWII:

- mystery meat: unidentifiable meat in a military mess or student dining hall
- bags of mystery: slang for sausage

orris root

"One powder looks much like another. If he (the apothecary) were already sickening, might he not have forgotten which was aconite and which was ground orris root?"

Orris root, the sweet smelling component of many perfumes, has been used since the time of the Egyptian pharaohs. It is the rhizome of the iris, which needs to be dried for at least two years and, in some cases up to five years, to develop its characteristic violet scent.

Orris is an ingredient in many brands of gin, in a blend of herbs and spices for Moroccan cuisine, and in tinctures to flavor syrups. Its taste is said to be indistinguishable from raspberry.

In the past, orris root has been used medicinally for the treatment of dropsy and other water retention problems. It is also used sometimes for bronchitis, coughs, and sore throat; for colic; and for congestion in the liver. It relieves shortness of breath, resists poisoning, starts menses as a uterine stimulant, and reduces bruises if used externally.

It was used, as well, to keep linen, blankets, wardrobes, chests, etc., fresh and smelling sweet, chewed to cover bad breath, and added to snuff. In modern times, we use it as a fixative in potpourri and in many perfumes.

Orris has been used as the main ingredient in almost all the old-fashioned face powders, foot powders, sachet powder, dental creams, violet scented soaps and cosmetics, and pot-pourri.

Could it be called a medieval wonder drug?

pall

"Out among the graves, the river mist cast a proper pall over the mourners."

"Pall" is used in several different ways:

As a verb:

- to lose strength or effectiveness, to dwindle
- to become insipid, boring, or wearisome
- to deprive of pleasure in something by overuse

As a noun:

- a covering that darkens or obscures: "a pall of smoke over the city"
- a gloomy effect or atmosphere
- a heavy cloth draped over a coffin

The word originated from Middle English, cloak or mantle, from Latin *pallium*, meaning covering or cloak.

penance

"Penance" is voluntary self-punishment to atone for a sin, crime, or some other form of wrong-doing. It's a form of apology for a mistake that can be either voluntary or ordered by someone else. In some Christian churches, it's a sacrament that includes contrition, confession to a priest, acceptance of punishment, and absolution.

Penance is the act of doing a good deed to make up for past wrongs. Shoveling your neighbor's sidewalk all winter could be your penance for not helping rake the leaves that dropped from your tree into his yard during the fall.

physick

"Lucie had taken pains to spread out the fatal dose of aconite in the records, a pinch in this physick, a pinch in that, over a week's time."

"Physick" is an archaic term for a medicinal agent (what we might call a prescription), especially a purgative (laxative), or for the practice of medicine generally. It also is an archaic term for natural science.

"Physic" comes from the Latin word for "study of nature," so it's unclear how it came to mean a "purging medicine." A close synonym is "cathartic," although that word is usually used to describe an emotional purging—like a good cry—rather than physical one.

It's all too easy to confuse "physic" with "physics," the scientific study of the interaction between energy and matter, or "psychic," someone who can read minds and see the future.

poison

Used as a noun, "poison" means a substance that causes injury, illness, or death, especially by chemical means. Figuratively, it means a destructive or hateful act or person. And also an alcoholic drink. "What's your poison?"

The word arose from Old French *poison*, meaning "a deadly potion or substance," also figuratively meaning, "spiritually corrupting ideas; evil intentions."

As an adjective, the word is used to describe such plants as poison ivy, poison

oak, and poison sumac. Poison gas is recorded from 1915; poison pen letter came into use a little later.

As a verb, "to poison" means to injure or kill with poison, or to corrupt. For example, "Jealousy can poison a good relationship." Also, from Old French, is *enerber* or *enherber*, meaning "to kill with poisonous plants."

Throughout human history, intentional application of poison has been used as a method of murder, pest-control, suicide, and execution. As a method of execution, poison has been ingested, as the ancient Athenians did, inhaled, as with carbon monoxide or hydrogen cyanide (gas chamber), injected, or even as an enema.

While arsenic is a naturally occurring environmental poison, its artificial concentrate was once nicknamed inheritance powder. In Medieval Europe, in the dawning age of the apothecary, it was common for monarchs to employ personal food tasters to thwart royal assassination.

Whether something is considered a poison or not may depend on the amount. Paracelsus (1493–1541), the father of toxicology, once wrote: "Everything is poison, there is poison in everything. Only the dose makes a thing not a poison." Biologically speaking, any substance, if given in large enough amounts, is poisonous and can cause death. For instance, several quarts of water (drunk at once or in one sitting) would constitute a lethal dose.

poppy

A poppy is any of various herbaceous plants of the genus *Papaver*, having colorful flowers usually with four delicate petals, milky sap, and a capsule with pores that release numerous small seeds. "Poppy" is also used for an extract or decoction of poppy used medicinally, such as opium.

One species of poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, is the source of the narcotic drug mixture opium, which contains powerful medicinal alkaloids such as morphine and has been used since ancient times as an analgesic and narcotic medicinal and recreational drug. It also produces edible seeds.

Papaver somniferum was domesticated by the indigenous people of Western and Central Europe between 6000 and 3500 BCE. However, it is believed that its origins may be the Sumerian people, where the first use of opium was recognized. Poppies and opium made their way around the world along the Silk Road. Juglets resembling poppy seed pods have been discovered with trace amounts of opium and the flower appeared in jewelry and on art pieces in Ancient Egypt, dated 1550–1292 BCE.

Poppy seeds are rich in oil, carbohydrates, calcium and protein and the oil is often used as cooking oil and salad dressing oil. Poppy oil can also be added to spices for cakes or breads. Poppy products are also used in different paints, varnishes, and some cosmetics. Bees use poppies as a pollen source.

A few species have other uses, principally as sources of drugs and foods. The opium poppy is used for production of dried latex and opium, the principal precursor of narcotic and analgesic opiates such as morphine, heroin, and codeine.

Poppies have long been used as a symbol of sleep, peace, and death: sleep because the opium extracted from them is a sedative, and death because of the common blood-red color of the red poppy. In Greek and Roman myths, poppies were used as offerings to the dead. They were also used as emblems on tombstones to symbolize eternal sleep.

Following the trench warfare in the poppy fields of Flanders, Belgium, during World War I, poppies have become a symbol of remembrance of soldiers who died during wartime, especially in the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other Commonwealth realms.

potion

"He mixed her a potion of rue, juniper, tansy, and wormwood, the dosage low enough to ensure that it would work gradually and could not poison her."

A "potion" is a liquid or liquid mixture, especially one that is medicinal, poisonous, or magical.

The word derives from the Latin word *potio* which refers to a drink or the act of drinking. The term "philter" is also used, often specifically for a love potion. Throughout history there have been several types of potions for a range of purposes: curing an illness, securing immortality, or inducing love. These potions were often ineffective or poisonous, but occasionally had some degree of medicinal success. Some popular ingredients used in potions across history include Spanish fly, nightshade plants, cannabis, and opium.

There was a strict hierarchy in the medical community of Europe during the 12th to 15th centuries. Male doctors were the most respected and paid, followed by female apothecaries, barber-surgeons and surgeons. Women were often the main source for medical treatment. Potions, in addition to calming teas or soup, were common homemade treatments made by women. When unable to go to a female house member, a person would often go to the wise women in the village. Wise women (often supposedly witches) were

knowledgeable in health care and could administer potions, lotions, or salves in addition to performing prayers or chants. This was often free of charge or significantly less expensive than the potions of apothecaries.

In the Middle Ages and the early modern period, using potions to induce sterility and abortion was widely practiced in Europe. The majority of abortive potions were made with herbs used to stimulate menstruation which were intended to cause a period and end a pregnancy. Abortive potions could also be prepared by infusion from a herb or tree. The willow tree was a common ingredient in these potions, as it was fabled to cause sterility. Several key theological and legal literature of the time condemned this practice, including Visigothic law and the Church.

ransom

"Ransom" is the practice of holding a prisoner or an item to extort money or property to secure their release, or it can mean the sum of money involved in such a practice.

The noun "ransom" originally came from Latin *redemptio*, "buying back."

In Europe during the Middle Ages, ransom became an important custom of chivalric warfare. A high-ranking knight, especially nobility or royalty, was worth a significant sum of money if captured, but worth nothing if he was killed. For this reason, the practice of ransom contributed to the development of heraldry, which allowed knights to advertise their identities, and by implication their ransom value, and made them less likely to be killed out of hand. Examples include Richard the Lion Heart and Bertrand du Guesclin.

ravish

"Ravish" has three quite different definitions:

- To force (another) to have sexual intercourse; rape.
- To overwhelm with emotion; enrapture. joy or delight.
- "moviegoers were ravished with delight."
- To seize as prey and carry away by force, plunder, rob.

robust

The word "robust" is robust with meaning, as follows:

- full of health and strength
- powerfully built, sturdy
- requiring much strength or energy: "a robust workout"
- active, dynamic, vigorous
- rich and full-bodied: "a robust wine"

—substantial in amount: "a robust fine"
—rough or crude: "a robust tale"

If you have a robust speaking voice, it means you have a voice that's deep and loud and strong. Robust is from Latin *robustus* "of oak, hard, strong."

routier

"In one of these lives a gentlewoman who has vowed to save her people from the routiers of King Edward."

"Routiers" were mercenary soldiers of the Middle Ages. Their particular distinction from other paid soldiers of the time was that they were organized into bands. The term is particularly associated with free companies who terrorized the French countryside during the Hundred Years' War.

The phenomenon of distinct bands of mercenary soldiers, often mainly footsoldiers (spearmen, slingers, javelineers, archers and crossbowmen), appears to date from the mid 1100s. Common elements include fighting for profit (as opposed to fealty or faith), coming from a foreign country, and being hired for specific campaigns. Numerous different terms were used for these troops.

Mercenary bands were mainly seen in France, though they operated in other places, including England. They were noted for their lawlessness, with many complaints about their depredations. While useful, they became increasingly unpopular and by the early 13th century, had begun to decline. In England, not only was their brutality condemned, but the rise of mercenary leaders of lowly origins to high office caused friction within the nobility.

The routiers' history can be traced back to a few years after the start of the Hundred Years' War, to Brittany in the early 1340s. No revenue was being generated from the Duchy of Brittany for the English army, which meant that the army's soldiers had to live off the land. This "living off the land" began as simple freebooting, but quickly transformed into "patis," or "ransoms of the country." A village near a garrison would usually be ransacked for any supplies. Subsequently, the village would be forced to pay the respective garrison for future protection.

This system made small fortunes for individual captains. These captains, whose income depended on controlling an area, rather than wages from the Duchy, were hard to control. While in theory, the King's Lieutenant could rely on his garrisons in time of war, they were scarcely enthusiastic combatants. There was, understandably, a lot of animosity between the peasants and soldiers.

The problem was not confined to Brittany. Château de Lusignan was a fortress near Poitiers captured by the Earl of Lancaster in September 1346. When the Earl withdrew from the area, he left a garrison under the command of Bertrand de Montferrand. Many of his troops were men with questionable pasts, criminals and misfits. Despite a truce between 1346 and 1350, the garrison laid waste to over fifty parishes, ten monasteries, and destroyed towns and castles throughout southern Poitou. In May 1347, a French force was sent to recapture the fortress but was ambushed by the garrison and forced to retreat.

Routiers were usually referred to as "Englishmen" in France, but they were actually composed for the most part by Gascons, after the name of the region of what is now South-West France in which they resided. But the Gascons were considered then as a distinct people from the French. The full demographic that filled the ranks of the routiers included Spaniards, Germans, English, and Frenchmen.

Unlike the earlier routiers companies, those of the Hundred Years' War were primarily mounted forces. Their main fighting men were men-at-arms, sometimes accompanied by mounted infantry including mounted archers. Larger companies of routiers could be surprisingly well organized. They each had a command structure with a staff that even included secretaries to collect and disperse their loot. A few of the groups had their own uniforms, such as the notorious Bandes Blanches of the Archpriest Arnaud de Cervole.

savory

"Digby took his leave directly after the savory with a warm feeling of having done the right thing."

A "savory" is a small serving of food that is spicy or salty but not sweet, such as smoked salmon, anchovies on toast, or pickled fruit. Savories are sometimes served in Great Britain as an hors d'oeuvre or instead of a sweet dessert.

unguent

An unguent is a salve, an ointment, or any cream containing medicinal ingredients applied to the skin for therapeutic purposes. It is a soothing preparation spread on wounds, burns, rashes, abrasions or other topical injuries.

"Unguent" comes from Middle English, from Latin *unguentum*, from *ungere*, to anoint.

"Salve" comes from Old English *sealf* "healing ointment."

ward

"You would be a ward of the court. Any money left you would be used up, and you would be sold to the highest bidder. That is the way."

In law, "ward" means a person under guard, protection, or surveillance, such as a minor or a person who by reason of incapacity (having a mental illness, for example) is under the protection of a court either directly or through a guardian appointed by the court.

In the Middle Ages, it also meant the act of keeping watch or being a lookout, as well as the state of being under guard.

weasel

"Summoner was the job of a weasel, and Potter Digby looked like nothing so much as that sly creature."

As a noun, a weasel is a small, carnivorous mammal having brownish fur, or a human person regarded as sneaky or treacherous.

As a verb, to weasel means to be evasive, sneaky, or to avoid an obligation, like paying your bills or doing the dishes.

In Greek culture, a weasel near one's house is a sign of bad luck. In Macedonia, however, weasels are generally seen as an omen of good fortune. Take your pick!

The furry kind of weasel is known for its short legs, long neck, and musky smell. In fact, the word's Proto-Germanic origin *wisand* carries the meaning of a stinky animal.

Welsh longbow

The longbow, often called the "Welsh longbow," was the weapon that brought the English their resounding victories at Crécy and Poitiers during the Hundred Years War. Edward III combined cavalry and archers, the archers literally darkening the sky with their arrows, the horsemen then rushing in to take advantage of the bloody confusion of the enemy. It was a deadly combination. The archers proved so critical in battle that in 1363, Edward ordered that regular archery practice should take the place of football on Sundays and Holy Days.

The longbow as we recognize it today, measuring around the height of a man, made its first major appearance towards the end of the Middle Ages. Although generally attributed to the Welsh, longbows have in fact been around at least since Neolithic times.

The Welsh longbow was documented by Gerald of Wales around 1188, who writes, "In the war against the Welsh, one of the men of arms was struck by an arrow shot at him by a Welshman. It went right through his thigh, high up, where it was protected inside and outside the leg by his iron chausses, and then through the skirt of his leather tunic; next it penetrated that part of the saddle which is called the alva or seat; and finally it lodged in his horse, driving so deep that it killed the animal."

It was fortunate for Edward III that his grandfather saw the value of putting aside the crossbow for the simpler but deadly Welsh weapon. A good longbowman could shoot 10 or 12 arrows per minute compared to the crossbowman's 2 arrows. Though the range of the crossbow was greater, by the middle of the 1300s, the 6-foot longbows of yew, maple, or oak were capable of penetrating chain mail and had a range of about 275 yards.

wimple

"Her head was against the door, her wimple pushed aside so she might hear."

A wimple is a medieval form of female head covering, formed of a large piece of cloth worn draped around the neck and chin, and covering the top of the head. It was usually made from white linen or silk. Its use developed in early medieval Europe because, in medieval Christianity, it was unseemly for a married woman to show her hair. A wimple might be elaborately starched, creased and folded in prescribed ways. Later elaborate versions were supported on wire or wicker framing, such as the cornette.

Today a plain wimple is worn by the nuns of certain orders who retain a traditional habit.

wrest

"Her husband had been taken from her ... And already the men around her tried to wrest her power from her."

To "wrest" is to forcefully grab or take something away. You can wrest away many things, such as remote controls and championships. An archaic meaning is: a key or wrench used for turning pins in a stringed instrument (such as a

piano).

"Wrest" comes from Old English *wrestan* "to twist, wrench." It has no connection to "wrist," the joint between the human hand and forearm.

This word is strong and a little violent. It's not easy to wrest something away. Wrestling away is a little like "wrestling" something away — you can't get it without a fight.



Food For Thought (quotes from the book)

When our King is victorious, those who return come with booty. When our King is defeated, those few who return come with empty hands. But in France, whether the French king wins or no, the people suffer. The soldiers on either side burn their villages and towns to starve the enemy. It makes no difference to a homeless, starving child whether he starves for his own king or another's.

I wanted you to be free of the fears that bedeviled your mother. To marry in your class would have condemned you to the same life, fearing that you'd lose your husband's respect if you did not bear a son and heir. A second son for good measure. Fearing that should he do something treasonous or criminal you would lose everything, through no fault of your own. Fearing that he might die too soon and leave you as I was left, without a home, with no standing, always beholden. And to whom would you go for help? Once Robert was gone, you would have no home. You would be a ward of the court. Any money left you would be used up, and you would be sold to the highest bidder. That is the way.

"They seem a pleasant lot."

"Monks." Bess shook her head, making her cap ribbons tremble. "Hiding away from the world. Pampered little boys, if you ask me. No wonder they're pleasant."

"I might have guessed that a woman was involved. We are such fools over them."

"Men never know when to be still."

"What do you know about fighting alone? You, who have been coddled from birth. 'Tis the same in battle. You sit in your fancy tents and plot and scheme, then move us around the field mimicking tactics you read about in books. You find it exciting. A challenge. You make wagers. Clever tactician — he lost only fifty men."

Lucie held up a tiny silver bowl, smaller than a thimble. "Powdered mandrake root, just this measure, no more." Her hands trembled as she dipped the bowl into a heavy crock on which was painted a root in the shape of a man. Owen steadied it for her. She poured the thimble's contents into a larger bowl. "Dried milk of poppy, this amount." She lifted a larger measure, and Owen tilted the second crock for her, on which was painted a delicately pleated flower. "Boiling water to two fingers beneath the edge." Her voice was calmer now. She poured the water. "And mix well over the lamp, then cool, still mixing, until I can keep my hand against the bowl for three breaths. I must not scald my patient's gullet."

His mother had fed them a mash of rosemary and sage in winter to keep their blood hot.

(Man speaking) "God created evil in the form of Eve, out of Adam's rib. He took the evil part of man and created woman. So plain, writ so clear, and yet few men heed the warning. And by their blindness they are undone."

(Same man speaking) "Neither woman dropped her gaze in humility when he approached. Bold, unnatural women. Wicked."

"But it's the way things are done. Daughters are chattel. A daughter is important only in helping with the young ones who come after, and in creating alliances through marriage."



The Dancing Mania

Justus Friedrich Karl Hecker (1795 - 1850) was a German physician and medical writer, whose works appear in medical encyclopedias and journals of the time. He studied medicine at the University of Berlin, graduating in 1817. In 1834, he became the university's "ordinary professor" for the History of Medicine. He particularly studied disease in relation to human history, including plague, smallpox, infant mortality, dancing mania and the sweating sickness, and is often said to have founded the study of the history of disease.

The account of *The Black Death* was Hecker's first important work of this kind. It was published in 1832, followed in the same year by his account of *The Dancing Mania*. These two books were the first to give Hecker a wide reputation.

A further excellent source of information was *The Dance Manias of the Middle Ages* (2013), by Osie Turner.



Words and Phrases

Frau Troffea

It was just another hot July day in 1518 when Frau Troffea began to dance fervently and uncontrollably in the narrow, cobbled streets of Strasbourg, jigging, twisting, and twirling. Onlookers apparently laughed and clapped at her joyful energy. When asked why she danced, Frau Troffea would not make eye contact nor respond. There was no music, but she twisted, twirled, and jigged for hours until she finally collapsed, exhausted.

As if in a trance, she started dancing again the following day and the next day after that, seemingly unable to stop. Others soon started following suit and she was eventually joined by some 400 other locals who danced uncontrollably alongside her for about two full months, their feet bloody and bruised.

People collapsed from exhaustion, unconsciousness or, in some cases, even death.

In a valiant attempt to fight fire with fire, the town officials tried to cure the outburst by hiring musicians and building a huge stage in the hope that the mania would soon burn out. Unfortunately, this simply encouraged more people to join the craze.

After suffering several days of non-stop dancing, Troffea was taken to the shrine of Saint Vitus high up in the Vosges Mountains, a three-day trip by horse and wagon, where it was hoped she might be cured. Then authorities ordered those people most heavily afflicted to be taken to the shrine. Frau Troffea was still there and had apparently been cured.

According to historian John Waller, St. Vitus was a Catholic saint believed by pious 16th-century Europeans to have the power to curse people with a dancing plague. When combined with the horrors of disease and famine, both of which were tearing through Strasbourg in 1518, the St. Vitus superstition may have triggered a stress-induced hysteria that took hold of much of the city.

choreomania / dancing mania

Choreomania, also known as dancing mania, St. John's Dance, tarantism and St. Vitus's Dance, is an uncontrollable urge to dance, especially in a frenzied, convulsive manner. It was a social phenomenon which occurred primarily in mainland Europe between the 7th and 17th centuries. It involved groups of people dancing erratically, sometimes thousands at a time until, allegedly, they collapsed from exhaustion and injuries, and sometimes died.

The word "choreomania" was coined by Paracelsus, a Swiss physician, alchemist, and astrologer. *Choros* is a Greek word which means dance, and *mania* is a Greek word meaning madness, frenzy, and enthusiasm. Mania is manifested by psychic elevation, increased motor activity, rapid speech and the quick flight of ideas. The word has been used since the 1500s as the second element in compounds expressing particular types of madness, such as nymphomania, kleptomania, and megalomania.

The dancing mania affected groups of people in Europe from the 7th until the 17th century. One of the observed patterns indicated that the outbreaks often occurred during times of difficulties such as the Black Plague, which caused millions of deaths in the 14th century. Hence, some theorize that the mania was a response to various hardships. Others identified it as a form of mass hysteria in which a group of individuals manifest strange fits due to social influence.

The earliest-known eruption of dancing mania occurred in the 7th century. Further flare-ups occurred during the 13th century, including one in 1237 in which a large group of children travelled from Erfurt to Arnstadt (about 12 miles), jumping and dancing all the way. This was in marked similarity to the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, a legend that originated around the same time. Another incident, in 1278, involved about 200 people dancing on a bridge over the River Meuse resulting in its collapse. Many of the survivors

were restored to full health at a nearby chapel dedicated to St. Vitus.

Four large outbreaks occurred between 1374 and 1381, then another in 1418 in Strasbourg, where people fasted for days and the outbreak was possibly caused by exhaustion.

Though the incident in 1518 beginning with Frau Troffea was one of the most extensive, further incidents occurred during the 16th century when the mania was at its peak: in 1536 in Basel, involving a group of children; and in 1551 in Anhalt, involving just one man. In the 17th century, incidents of recurrent dancing were recorded by professor of medicine Gregor Horst, who noted: "Several women who annually visit the chapel of St. Vitus in Drefelhausen ... dance madly all day and all night until they collapse in ecstasy. In this way they come to themselves again and feel little or nothing until the next May, when they are again ... forced around St. Vitus's Day to betake themselves to that place..."

The outbreaks of dancing mania varied. Generally occurring in times of hardship, up to tens of thousands of people would appear to dance for hours, days, weeks, and even months. Whether the dancing was spontaneous, or an organized event, is debated. What is certain, however, is that dancers seemed to be in a state of unconsciousness and unable to control themselves.

In his research into social phenomena, modern author Robert Bartholomew notes that contemporary sources record that participants often did not reside where the dancing took place. Such people would travel from place to place, and others would join them along the way. With them, they brought customs and behavior that were strange to the local people. Bartholomew describes how dancers wore "strange, colorful attire" and "held wooden sticks."

Robert Marks, in his study of hypnotism, notes that some decorated their hair with garlands. However, not all outbreaks involved foreigners, and not all were particularly calm. Bartholomew notes that some "paraded around naked" and made "obscene gestures." Some even had sexual intercourse. Others acted like animals, and jumped, hopped, and leapt about.

They hardly stopped, and some danced until they broke their ribs and subsequently died. Throughout, dancers screamed, laughed, or cried, and some sang. Bartholomew also notes that observers of dancing mania were sometimes treated violently if they refused to join in. Participants demonstrated odd reactions to the color red; in *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, Midelfort notes they "could not perceive the color red at all," and Bartholomew reports "it was said that dancers could not stand... the color red, often becoming violent on seeing [it]."

Bartholomew notes that the dancers also "could not stand pointed shoes," and that dancers enjoyed their feet being hit. Throughout, those affected by dancing mania suffered from a variety of ailments, including chest pains, convulsions, hallucinations, epileptic fits, hyperventilation, and visions. In the end, most simply dropped down, overwhelmed with exhaustion. Midelfort, however, describes how some ended up in a state of ecstasy.

Contemporary doctors and religious figures were baffled, offering possession or "hot blood" as potential explanations for the trance-like condition. Those afflicted often danced until their feet bled and were seldom capable of taking in water or food.

The condition was initially considered a curse sent by a saint, usually St. John the Baptist or St. Vitus, and was therefore known as "St. Vitus' Dance" or "St. John's Dance." Victims of dancing mania often ended their processions at places dedicated to those saints. Incidents frequently broke out around the time of the feast of St. Vitus.

St. Vitus's Dance was diagnosed, in the 17th century, as Sydenham's chorea. A disease of the nervous system, chorea is characterized by symptoms resembling those of dancing mania, which has also rather unconvincingly been considered a form of epilepsy.

A religious scholar proposes that choreomania was actually a practice of trance devotion that was part of larger ecstatic and spectacular dance practices of the late medieval period. Apparently, choreomanics sometimes saw visions of heaven or performed their own exorcisms on each other, which allowed them to sidestep the authority of priests, whom they accused of corruption.

While there is no official consensus on what caused these incidents, there are some theories, though it remains unclear whether it was a real illness or a social phenomenon. One of the most prominent theories is that victims suffered from ergot poisoning, known as St. Anthony's fire in the Middle Ages.

Ergotism can cause hallucinations and convulsions, but cannot account for the other strange behavior most commonly identified with dancing mania. Other theories suggest that the symptoms were similar to encephalitis, epilepsy, and typhus, but as with ergotism, those conditions cannot account for all symptoms. However, some historians link ergot poisoning to phenomena like the Salem Witch hysteria.

Numerous sources discuss how dancing mania, and tarantism, may have simply been the result of stress and tension caused by natural disasters around the time, such as plagues and floods. The recurring waves of the Black Death

and other natural disasters, combined with the dawn of Reformation, would have made for a great deal of uncertainty and challenge for the people of Europe during this time period.

People may have danced to relieve themselves of the stress and poverty of the day, and in so doing, attempted to become ecstatic and see visions. According to one researcher, the spontaneous spread of this phenomenon through social networks played a significant role: "It's hard to deny that the dancing mania was marked by social contagion exacerbated by stress. Outbreaks occurred along trade routes or reoccurred in the same areas — where people had knowledge of the format, in other words. Beliefs and behavior can travel just like pathogens."

Another popular theory is that the eruptions were all staged by religious cults, in accordance with ancient Greek and Roman rituals. Despite being banned at the time, these rituals could be performed under the guise of uncontrollable dancing mania. Author Justus Hecker described it as a kind of festival, where a practice known as "the kindling of the Nodfyr" was carried out. This involved jumping through fire and smoke, in an attempt to ward off disease. Bartholomew notes how participants in this ritual would often continue to jump and leap long after the flames had gone.

It is certain that many participants of dancing mania were psychologically disturbed, but it is also likely that some took part in the activities out of fear, or simply wished to copy everyone else. Sources agree that dancing mania was one of the earliest-recorded forms of mass hysteria, and describe it as a "psychic epidemic," with numerous explanations that might account for the behavior of the dancers. Dr. John Waller characterizes choreomania as a "mass psychogenic illness" potentially brought on by exacerbated social and economic stress.

Paracelsus

Paracelsus (c.1493-1541), born Theophrastus von Hohenheim, was a Swiss physician, alchemist, lay theologian, and philosopher. He was a pioneer in several aspects of medicine, emphasizing the value of observation in combination with received wisdom, and is credited as the "father of toxicology." Paracelsus had a substantial influence as a prophet or diviner, his *Prognostications* being studied by Rosicrucians in the 17th century.

Toxicology is the scientific study of the characteristics and effects of poisons on living organisms. It is said that the name Paracelsus meant 'equal to Celsus' (referring to the Roman encyclopedist Aulus Cornelius Celsus), and the change in his name was meant to indicate his desire to rival ancient medical authorities such as Celsus and Galen.

Paracelsus sought a universal knowledge that was not found in books or faculties. Thus, between 1517 and 1524, he embarked on a series of extensive travels. His wanderings led him all through Europe, Scandinavia, Russia, Hungary, Croatia, Rhodes, Constantinople, and possibly even Egypt. During this period of travel, Paracelsus enlisted as an army surgeon and was involved in the wars waged by Venice, Holland, Denmark, and the Tatars.

The term Dance Mania or "choreomania" was coined by Paracelsus. He was the first to attribute the mania to medical causes as opposed to the supernatural (i.e. demonic possession or curses from displeased saints). He visited Strasbourg seven years after the Dance Plague took place and is actually the only one to have recorded the name of Frau Troffea. From his case study, we know that at first, the citizens of Strasbourg suspected the frau of faking it, because "nothing annoyed her husband more than just dancing." However, as the dance continued late into the night, they believed she was genuinely stricken.

His method of cure was, with one exception, eminently sensible and modern: low diet, fasting, solitary confinement, being made to sit in uncomfortable places, till misery and pain cured the laughter and jigging desires, immersion in cold water, and even corporeal chastisement.

jigging

The original source of the word "jig" is unknown, but in the 1500s, "jigging" described lively, irregular dancing.

"Jig" is a very short word with an amazing number of meanings. The following five are definitions most of us will be familiar with:

- any of several lively springy dances in triple rhythm
- music to which a jig may be danced
- to move or bob up and down jerkily and rapidly
- trick or game: used chiefly in the phrase "the jig is up"
- a type of weighted fishing lure

The syllable also forms the basis of colloquial words such as jiggalorum, meaning "a trifle," jigamoree, meaning "something unknown," and thingamajig, meaning "something whose name is unknown or forgotten."

There are also many definitions for "jigger," most of them to do with the practical aspects of constructing various things and with small boats. The word also means a measure of 1 1/2 fluid ounces of liquor and, less pleasant, is one of the names for chiggers.

Sydenham's chorea

In the 17th century, medieval Dance Mania and the Dancing Plague had been diagnosed as Sydenham's chorea.

Also known as chorea minor and rheumatic chorea, Sydenham's chorea is a neurological disorder characterized by involuntary, rapid, jerky movements of the face, arms, and legs. It is caused by an autoimmune reaction to a streptococcal infection. Symptoms can last for months or longer. Treatment includes antibiotics to treat the infection, as well as medications to control the movements.

Sydenham's chorea is more common in females than males, and most cases affect children between 5 and 15 years of age. Adult onset of Sydenham's chorea is comparatively rare. In some instances, there may be residual signs of chorea and behavioral abnormalities, waxing and waning over a year or more.

ergot poisoning

"Ergot" is a fungus that grows on rye and less commonly on other grasses such as wheat. Ergot epidemics in France between 900 CE and 1300 CE killed from 20,000 to 50,000 people.

During the Middle Ages, ergotism, a severe reaction to ergot-contaminated food (such as rye bread), was common and known as St. Anthony's fire. Characteristics of ergotism are convulsions, muscle spasms, vomiting, hallucinations, and a gangrenous pain where the victim's limbs, fingers, toes, and nose were "eaten up by the holy fire that blackened like charcoal." Victims often lost parts of their extremities or entire limbs due to blood vessel constriction associated with gangrenous ergotism. Ergotism is rare now due to careful screening of cereal grains.

poverty

Poverty is the state in which an individual lacks sufficient financial resources to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. It can be measured in terms of absolute poverty, which refers to a fixed standard of living, or relative poverty, which compares an individual's resources to those of others in his or her society. Whatever definition one uses, the effects of poverty are harmful to both individuals and society.

The word comes from Old French *poverté*, meaning "destitution, want, penury, need, or insufficiency of money or goods," and thence from Latin *paupertatem*. From the early 1200s, it could refer to deliberate poverty as a Christian act. From the mid-1300s, figurative use included "scantiness, dearth,

and infertility." For example, "poverty of the spirit," or "poverty of the soil."

The related word, "poor," has been used figuratively in several ways. The poor boy sandwich, made of simple but filling ingredients, was invented and named in New Orleans in 1921. To poor mouth means to habitually complain about a lack of money, often while secretly having more financial resources than one admits. It can also imply using poverty as an excuse for not contributing or participating in certain activities. In Scottish dialect, to make a poor mouth means to "whine." A poor relation is a "relative or kinsman in humble circumstances."

Statistically, as of 2019, most of the world's people live in poverty: in PPP (purchasing power parity) dollars, 85% of people live on less than \$30 per day, two-thirds live on less than \$10 per day, and 10% live on less than \$1.90 per day.

cult

"Cult" is a term often applied to religious movements and other exclusive social groups which have unusual, and often extreme, religious, spiritual, or philosophical beliefs and rituals. Obsessive devotion to a particular person, object, or goal is another characteristic often ascribed to cults. The term has various definitions both in popular culture and academia and has been an ongoing source of contention among scholars across several fields of study.

Beginning in the 1930s, new religious movements became an object of sociological study within the context of the study of religious behavior. Since the 1940s, the Christian countercult movement has opposed some sects and new religious movements, labeling them cults because of their unorthodox beliefs. Since the 1970s, the secular anti-cult movement has opposed certain groups, accusing them of practicing brainwashing.

In theology, a cult is a specific system of religious worship, especially with reference to its rites and deity, or to a sect devoted to such a system. In sociology, a cult is a quasi-religious organization using devious psychological techniques to gain and control adherents. Sociologists use the word to mean a group having an exclusive ideology and ritual practices centered on sacred symbols, especially one characterized by lack of organizational structure. Outside of academia, the word is often used to refer to intense interest in and devotion to a person, idea, or activity, such as "the cult of yoga." Or a cult may simply be something regarded as fashionable or significant by a particular group.

The media promotes the cult of celebrity especially. Such devotion is regarded as a literary or intellectual fad. Some of us will remember the 1960s

Beatlemania, adoration of the British rock band, The Beatles.

Cult, which shares an origin with culture and cultivate, comes from the Latin *cultus*, a noun with meanings ranging from "tilling, cultivation" to "training or education" to "adoration." In English, cult has evolved a number of meanings following a fairly logical path. The earliest known uses of the word, recorded in the 17th century, broadly denoted "worship." From there, cult came to refer to a specific branch of a religion or the rites and practices of that branch, as in "the cult of Dionysus." By the early 18th century, cult could refer to a non-religious admiration or devotion, such as to a person, idea, or fad ("the cult of success"). Finally, by the 19th century, the word came to be used of "a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious."

hardship

Hardship refers to a condition of life that causes difficulty or suffering, such as lack of money, food, or comfort. It often involves enduring pain or deprivation in various forms.

The term is a combination of the word "hard" and "ship," a word-forming element meaning, in this case, "quality or condition."

"Hard" has a long history. In Old English, it meant "solid and firm, not soft," but also, "difficult to endure, carried on with great exertion." It acquired other shades of meaning as the years rolled by:

- difficult to do (1200)
- hard of hearing, arising from "difficult to do"
- of water, in reference to the presence of mineral salts (1650s)
- hard times "period of poverty" (1705)
- hard money, silver or gold coin, as opposed to paper (1706)
- hard consonants (1775)
- strong, spiritous, fermented, as in hard cider (1789)
- hard facts (1853)
- do something the hard way (1907)
- hard news in journalism (1918)
- play hard to get (1945)
- hard drugs (1955)
- hard copy, as opposed to computer record (1964)
- hard rock as a pop music style (1967)
- hard disk (1978)
- computer hard drive (1983)

St. John the Baptist

Saint John the Baptist was a Jewish prophet known for baptizing Jesus and

preaching about repentance and the coming of God's final judgment. He is revered in Christianity, Islam, and other faiths, and is celebrated for his role as a forerunner to Jesus Christ.

Author Justus Hecker goes on to say that St. John's day was solemnized with all sorts of strange and rude customs, many of them heathen. Bacchanalian dances and the wild extravagancies of a heated imaginations accompanied the half-heathen, half-Christian festival.

St. Vitus

St. Vitus is a significant figure in Christian mythology, particularly within the context of saints and their veneration. His life and legend have influenced various aspects of culture, including art, music, and even folklore.

The miracles attributed to St. Vitus are numerous. In addition to exorcisms, St. Vitus is credited with performing healings for those suffering from physical ailments. His ability to cure the sick made him a beloved figure among the faithful. Many churches dedicated to St. Vitus became centers for healing, drawing people who sought miraculous cures.

In Germany, his feast was celebrated with dancing before his statue. This dancing became popular and the name "Saint Vitus Dance" was given to the neurological disorder thought then to be Sydenham's chorea. It led to Vitus being considered the patron saint of dancers and of entertainers in general. He is also said to protect against lightning strikes, animal attacks and oversleeping.

delusion

A delusion is a strongly held irrational belief that is false or not based in reality, often maintained despite clear evidence to the contrary. It is characterized by an inability to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined.

The term has its roots in the Latin word *deludere*, which means "to mock or deceive." In the Middle Ages, the term was used to describe a false belief or judgment that was contrary to reality. By the 16th century, the word had come to be associated with mental illness and was often used to describe the irrational beliefs of people with psychiatric disorders.

Today, the term "delusion" is used to describe a wide range of false beliefs, including those that are based on reality but are exaggerated or distorted, those that are completely unfounded, and those that are based on hallucinations or other perceptual disturbances. Delusions can be a symptom

of a variety of mental disorders, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and dementia.

The term "delusions of grandeur" is recorded from 1840, though the two words were in close association for some time before that.

spectacle

"Spectacle" refers to an unusual or impressive event that attracts attention, often because it is visually striking or dramatic. It can also mean a public show or display, especially one on a large or lavish scale, that is exciting to watch. In addition, it can mean a regrettable public display, as of bad behavior or an object of curiosity or contempt.

The word was derived in Middle English from c. 1340 as "specially prepared or arranged display." The sense of "object of public contempt, derision or wonderment" is from the mid-1300s. It has also been a term of art in theater dating from the 17th century.

tympany

"... until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion. They then complained of extreme oppression, and groaned as if in the agonies of death, until they were swathed in cloths bound tightly round their waists, upon which they again recovered, and remained free from complaint until the next attack. This practice of swathing was resorted to on account of the tympany which followed these spasmodic ravings."

"Tympany" means a flatulent distention of the belly. Figuratively, it can mean an inflated manner or bombast. The term is from the Greek *túurtavo*, meaning "drum."

swathe

"Swathe" means to bind, wrap, or cover something with a bandage or cloth. It can also refer to a long strip or large area, especially of land, such as a swathe of forest or crops.

A related but separate word is swaddle, "to bind or wrap (an infant) with long strips of cloth." The Century Dictionary, in 1891, said, "Young children ... are still bandaged in this manner in many parts of Europe to prevent them from using their limbs freely, owing to a fancy that those who are left free in infancy become deformed." Babies were being swaddled at least 4500 years ago.

"Swathe" rhymes with "bathe" and is a verb. It has a cousin, "swath," which is pronounced "swoth" or "swaath," and is a noun. But they can both mean strips of things. Today, in the US, "to cut a swath" is to make a pompous display, or to swagger.

Another close relative of swath is "swatch," as in an article discussing a hailstorm that "cut across a wide swatch of the region." By 1647, a "swatch" had become a sample of cloth, then a sample of anything.

pointed-toed shoes

"Dancers against pointed-toed shoes frequently poured forth imprecations against them, and menaced their destruction. They intimidated the people also to such a degree that there was an express ordinance issued that no one should make any but square-toed shoes, because these fanatics had manifested a morbid dislike to the pointed shoes which had come into fashion immediately after the 'Great Mortality' in 1350. They were still more irritated at the sight of red colours, the influence of which on the disordered nerves might lead us to imagine an extraordinary accordance between this spasmodic malady and the condition of infuriated animals; but in the St. John's dancers this excitement was probably connected with apparitions consequent upon their convulsions."

Pointed-toe shoes, known as poulaines or cracows, originated in medieval Poland around the mid-14th century. "Poulaine" derives from the Middle French phrase *souliers à la poulaine*, or "shoes in the Polish fashion." They became a fashionable status symbol among the upper classes in Europe. Their exaggerated, carrot-shaped length, often as much as five inches extending past the toes, often required stuffing to maintain shape and, while they were a sign of wealth, they also led to foot health issues.

In fact, the shoes became so long and distracting that they obstructed the wearer's ability to walk. In some cases, a string was attached below the knee to assist in moving the toe points to enable walking. We could call this "fashion over function," and it was, perhaps, one of the silliest and most fascinating trends in medieval fashion.

Medieval trends often lasted for a century or more, due to the slow, protracted passage of culture across towns and countries, in the absence of any widely distributed media. Until the 18th century, fashions emerged at the top of society and then slowly trickled down, class by class, often taking years to reach rural areas.

Poulaines stand out even more because medieval fashion was often governed

by clean lines and a practical, chaste minimalism. Perhaps the best explanation for this confounding flamboyance is that the shoes emerged soon after the Black Death killed 30 to 60 percent of the population of Europe. So poulaines may have been a kind of retail therapy for coping with the disappearance of 25 million people.

Fashion is often about social display. Medieval society was highly stratified, and clothing was one of the most obvious ways for a person to demonstrate their social status, whether through towering hats, billowing sleeves, or pointy shoes.

Only the nobility and wealthy merchants could afford to purchase such extraordinarily long shoes—and the longer and more costly they were, the more wealth and status they displayed. In a text from 1394, a monk from Worcestershire, England, claimed that some people wore shoes with pointed toes "half a yard in length, thus it was necessary for them to be tied to the shin with chains of silver before they could walk with them."

Every person who could afford shoes wore poulaines, though the longer tips were generally reserved for the nobility, who were willing to walk around in footwear seemingly designed for pratfalls. Shoes with absurdly long toes were expensive and would clearly prevent the wearer from doing any kind of physical labor. So they were also an indicator of leisure and luxury, free of the tyranny of practicality.

Men's poulaines would typically have a longer point than their female counterparts, with some even reaching five inches. To keep the toe's shape, they were typically stuffed with moss, wool or horsehair. Whalebone might be used as a stiffener. Poulaines also had a sort of sex appeal, being cut to show off the colored hose around a lord's ankle—considered quite sexy at the time. People thought the longer the toe, the more masculine the wearer.

Most poulaines that survive today were made of leather, but medieval Europeans would have used every possible fabric. High society used embroidered textiles, velvets, and silks. Such shoes might be hand-painted or etched with intricate patterns. Though these opulent poulaines appear in many medieval paintings, no actual examples survive.

Poulaines hit their peak in popularity between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The fact that the trendy shoe made an impact on the Middle Ages cannot be understated. But these impacts weren't necessarily all great.

As can be imagined with such an extreme and uncomfortable shoe, poulaine-wearers suffered for their fashion in more ways than one. A 2021 study revealed an increase in foot disorders around the same time that these pointy

shoes were in vogue. Researchers at Cambridge found a higher number of signs of bunions in the remains of 14th- and 15th-century individuals compared to those from the 11th and 13th centuries. When it comes to Middle Age fashions, beauty really is pain, apparently.

The trendy shoe was also controversial. Religious leaders and clergy railed against the poulaine, calling it "lascivious" and the cause of disasters like plague. Pope Urban V even banned the pointed shoe in 1362, but the proclamation fell on deaf ears. The London Museum states that, after the Great Pestilence of 1348, "clerics claimed the plague was sent by God to punish Londoners for their sins, especially sexual sins." It would seem that pointy shoes and religion did not mix well in the Middle Ages.

Just as with trend cycles of today, poulaines saturated medieval Europe, which became a problem because they were worn by elites to connote a certain status. As a result, authorities passed sumptuary laws, which regulated the toe length of the poulaine to distinguish between nobility and commoners.

By 1475, the poulaine had vanished. Under the reign of King Henry VIII, European footwear made a hard pivot into the wide, box-toed shoes. Pointy men's shoes had a reprise in England in the 1950s, with the winklepicker. Though far less extreme than the most dramatic poulaines, winklepicker wearers also stuffed the toes of their shoes with cotton or tissue paper to keep their tips aloft—like medieval lords.

Did the winklepicker wearers know that pointy shoes had been worn by medieval lords? Or did they just enjoy being "different"?

ordinance

"They intimidated the people also to such a degree that there was an express ordinance issued that no one should make any but square-toed shoes, because these fanatics had manifested a morbid dislike to the pointed shoes which had come into fashion immediately after the 'Great Mortality' in 1350."

An "ordinance" is an authoritative command or order. It may also refer to a custom or practice established by long usage, or a religious rite. For example, a "city ordinance against excessive horn blowing." Such an order is generally narrower or more transitory than a law.

Ordinance and ordnance are homophones, or near homophones at least, depending on whether the speaker pronounces ordinance with two syllables or three. Regardless of their pronunciation, however, they are two separate words with distinct meanings. The first refers to a law passed by a legislative

body; the second is a type of military equipment.

distress

"... some months previously the districts in the neighbourhood of the Rhine and the Main had met with great disasters. So early as February, both these rivers had overflowed their banks to a great extent; the walls of the town of Cologne, on the side next the Rhine, had fallen down, and a great many villages had been reduced to the utmost distress. Security of property there was none; arbitrary will everywhere prevailed; corruption of morals and rude power rarely met with even a feeble opposition."

"Distress" refers to a state of great suffering or trouble, either physically or mentally. It can also describe a painful situation or misfortune that causes significant strain or worry.

Additional meanings include:

- to treat an object or fabric to make it look antique
- to constrain or overcome by harassment
- physical deterioration, as of a highway, caused by hard use over time
- in navigation: a ship, aircraft, etc. in dire need of help
- in law: the seizure of property as security for payment of a debt or claim

oppress

"Thus, throughout the western parts of Germany, and especially in the districts bordering on the Rhine, there was a wretched and oppressed populace; and if we take into consideration that among their numerous bands many wandered about, whose consciences were tormented with the recollection of the crimes which they had committed during the prevalence of the Black Plague, we shall comprehend how their despair sought relief in the intoxication of an artificial delirium."

To oppress means to impose excessive or unfair burdens, to keep down by severe and unjust use of force or authority. The suffering may be physical or mental. "He was oppressed by a sense of failure."

The word oppress comes from the Latin *oppressus*, past participle of *opprimere*, ("to press against," "to squeeze," "to suffocate").

Thus, authoritarian governments want their citizenry to feel "pressed down," and to live in fear that if they displease the authorities they will, in a metaphorical sense, be "squeezed" and "suffocated." Such governments

oppress the people by using restriction, control, terror, hopelessness, and despair. The tyrant's tools of oppression include, for example, extremely harsh punishments for making "unpatriotic" statements; developing a secret police force; prohibiting freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press; controlling the monetary system and economy; and imprisoning or killing activists or other leaders who might pose a threat to their power.

Oppression also results from natural causes, such as earthquakes, flooding, crop failures, and rapidly spreading illness. People may be squeezed, suffocated, and beaten down by starvation and lack of shelter.

lycanthropy

"Teutonic knights in Prussia not unfrequently condemned those maniacs to the stake who imagined themselves to be metamorphosed into wolves—an extraordinary species of insanity, which, having existed in Greece before our era, spread, in process of time over Europe... In modern times Lycanthropy—such was the name given to this infatuation—has vanished from the earth, but it is nevertheless well worthy the consideration of the observer of human aberrations."

Lycanthropy refers to the mythical ability or belief that a human can transform into a wolf or wolf-like creature, often associated with witchcraft or magic. This act of shapeshifting between the form of a human being and an animal (usually a wolf) is often done during a full moon, according to legend. It can also describe a mental disorder where a person believes they have become a wolf or another animal.

Tales of lycanthropy have captivated imaginations for millennia. The word lycanthropy comes from the Greek words *lykos*, meaning "wolf," and *anthrōpos*, meaning "human being."

Usually, a person is deemed to take the form of the most dangerous beast of prey of the region: the wolf or bear in Europe and northern Asia, the hyena or leopard in Africa, and the tiger in India, China, Japan, and elsewhere in Asia; but other animals are mentioned too. Both the superstition and the psychiatric disorder are linked with belief in animal guardian spirits, vampires, totemism, witches, and werewolves. The folklore, fairy tales, and legends of many nations and peoples include this act of shapeshifting.

Stories about the werewolf (in French, *loup-garou*) were widely believed in Europe during the Middle Ages. Outlaws and bandits played on these superstitions by sometimes wearing wolfskins over their armor. At that time, people were unusually prone to develop the delusion that they themselves

were wolves. But suspected lycanthropists were burned alive if convicted. Only rarely was their condition recognized as a psychological disturbance. Although the superstition is no longer common, traces still linger in some primitive and isolated areas.

In many cases, the "werewolf" was a scapegoat for natural disasters or societal tensions. Trials for suspected werewolves occurred alongside witch hunts, with accusations leading to executions.

tarantism

"We allude to the disease called Tarantism, which made its first appearance in Apulia, and thence spread over the other provinces of Italy, where, during some centuries, it prevailed as a great epidemic. In the present times, it has vanished, or at least has lost altogether its original importance, like the St. Vitus's dance, lycanthropy, and witchcraft."

Tarantism is a disorder characterized by an uncontrollable urge to dance, especially prevalent in Italy from the 15th to 17th century and popularly attributed to the bite of a tarantula or wolf spider and considered to be incapable of cure except by protracted dancing to appropriate music. The bite leads to physical symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, and trembling. It is often accompanied by intense emotional reactions such as uncontrollable weeping, laughing, and singing.

Supposedly a particular kind of dance, called the tarantella, evolved from this therapy.

Tarantism had a significant impact on European culture, particularly in the areas of music and the development of folk music throughout Europe, literature, and medicine, with authors such as Shakespeare, Molière, and Boccaccio writing works that featured characters afflicted with the condition.

flagellant

"As far back as the eleventh century, many believers in Asia and Southern Europe afflicted themselves with the punishment of flagellation. The author of the solemn processions of the Flagellants is said to have been St. Anthony; for even in his time (1231) this kind of penance was so much in vogue, that it is recorded as an eventful circumstance in the history of the world."

A flagellant is a person who practices self-flagellation, which involves whipping himself or herself as a form of religious discipline or penance. The

term can also refer to someone who derives sexual pleasure from being beaten or from beating another person. In Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries, many fanatical sects flourished which maintained that flagellation was of equal virtue with baptism and the sacrament.

Flagellation (from Latin *flagellare*, to whip) was quite a common practice amongst the more fervently religious throughout antiquity. Christianity formed a permanent tradition surrounding the doctrine of mortification of the flesh, ranging from self-denial, wearing hairshirts and chains, to fasting and self-flagellation.

Flagellant sects arose in northern Italy and had become large and widespread by about 1260. Groups marched through European towns, whipping each other to atone for their sins and calling on the populace to repent. They gained many new members in the mid-14th century while the Black Death was ravaging Europe. Though periodically suppressed by the authorities, flagellant sects enjoyed sporadic resurgences into the 16th century.



Food for Thought

Paracelsus seemed to have believed that St Vitus Dance was more or less caused by unhappy wives doing it to make fools of their husbands.

"For all that exists in man, whether good or evil, is rendered conspicuous by the presence of great danger. His inmost feelings are roused — the thought of self-preservation masters his spirit — self-denial is put to severe proof, and wherever darkness and barbarism prevail, there the affrighted mortal flies to the idols of his superstition, and all laws, human and divine, are criminally violated." (Justus Friedrich Karl Hecker)

Beliefs and behavior can travel just like pathogens.



How The Irish Saved Civilization

The full title of this book by Thomas Cahill is *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe*. It is an account of the role played by Irish monks in transcribing and preserving Classical civilization during the Middle Ages.

Cahill argues a case for the Irish people's critical role in preserving Western Civilization from utter destruction by the barbarian Huns and the Germanic tribes. A particular focus is placed upon Saint Patrick as well as Saint Augustine of Canterbury and Saint Columba and the monasteries he set up in the Hiberno-Scottish mission. These holy men, according to Cahill, "single-handedly refounded European civilization throughout the continent."

That, of course, is nonsense. Cahill makes no allowances for the continued preservation of Greek and Roman manuscripts in the Arab and Byzantine empires and in a few monasteries scattered throughout Europe. Nonetheless, he tells an interesting story.

So, the Irish didn't exactly save "civilization." However, they saved much of the Latin writing of the Classical Roman Empire, thus giving us a better chance to read Cicero and Seneca today. Which was a very good thing and we can be grateful for being able to read more of the Greek and Roman philosophers than we might have otherwise.

The book was favorably reviewed in many general-interest, quality newspapers and magazines. However, it also provoked criticism from skeptical reviewers, many of them historians, some of whom offered qualified praise or outright rejections of the main thesis, and some of whom perceived bias.

About the Author:

Thomas Cahill (1940-2022), former director of religious publishing at Doubleday, was a lifelong scholar and studied with some of America's most distinguished literary and Biblical scholars. Born in New York City to Irish-American parents, Cahill was educated by Jesuits and completed a B.A. in classical literature and theology. He was the author of six volumes in the *Hinges of History* series, including *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. Cahill taught at various universities, served as the North American education correspondent for the *Times of London*, and was for many years a regular contributor to the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*.

skeptic

A skeptic (sceptic in the UK) is a person who questions the truth of beliefs, claims, or statements, often requiring strong evidence before accepting them. In ancient Greece, a skeptic was a member of an ancient Greek school of skepticism, especially that of Pyrrho of Elis (c360 - c272 BCE).

Skeptics are doubters — they need to see proof before they will believe. Coming from the Greek word *skeptikos*, which means "thoughtful or inquiring," it's no surprise that a skeptic is someone who asks a lot of questions — and isn't easily convinced.

Skeptics normally recommend not disbelief but suspension of belief. They choose to maintain a neutral attitude that neither affirms nor denies the claim. This attitude is often motivated by the impression that the available evidence is insufficient to support the claim.

Skepticism as an expression of questioning or doubt can be applied to any topic, such as politics, religion, or pseudoscience. Scientific skepticism, for example, advocates testing beliefs for reliability, by subjecting them to systematic investigation using the scientific method, to discover empirical evidence for them.

The opposite of skepticism is dogmatism, which implies an attitude of certainty in the form of an unquestioning belief.

"Skeptic does not mean him who doubts, but him who investigates or researches as opposed to him who asserts and thinks that he has found."
(Miguel de Unamuno, *Essays and Soliloquies*, 1924)

barbarian

"Barbarian" is derived from the Greek *bárbaros*, used among the early Greeks to describe all foreigners. Since the 1300s, it also means a rude, brutal, cruel person. Barbarians can be any group judged to be less civilized, like a tribal society, primitive nomads, or social class (such as bandits) both within and outside one's own nation.

We use this word as an insult for anyone who's acting rude, uncultured, or particularly savage but we also romanticize some groups as noble savages.

In ancient Greece, the term was applied to everyone who did not speak Greek and follow classical Greek customs. There was never a united barbarian group, and many of the different tribes, such as Goths, Vandals, Saxons,

Huns, Celts, and Picts, shifted alliances over the years or fought alongside Roman forces against other barbarian armies.

According to Greek writers, the word was created because the language foreigners spoke sounded to Greeks like gibberish represented by the sounds "bar bar."

A word "barbara-" is also found in the Sanskrit of ancient India, meaning to stammer, implying someone with an unfamiliar language. Several scholars have argued that the "barbar" in the word barbarian may be an attempt to imitate a stammering voice.

Greek speakers readily conflated speaking poorly with stupidity. Their attitudes towards "barbarians" developed in parallel with the growth of chattel slavery, especially in Athens. Slave ownership was no longer for the rich: most Athenian households came to have slaves.

The Hellenic stereotype of barbarism was that barbarians were like children, unable to speak or reason properly, effeminate, cowardly, cruel, unable to control their appetites and desires, and politically unable to govern themselves.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says that the name Barbary, once used to describe North Africa, is derived from the region's Berber inhabitants, not from Greek *bárbaros*.

The Chinese depicted non-Chinese groups as somewhat less than human, to justify conquering such peoples and taking their lands. The Great Wall of China was built to stop "barbarians" from crossing the northern border of China. The British, and other European colonial settlers of the US, did the same thing by referring to Native Americans as "savages."

Modern popular culture contains such fantasy figures as Conan the Barbarian. In these fantasies, the negative connotations are often inverted. For example, *The Phoenix on the Sword* (1932), is clearly slanted to imply that the kingdom greatly benefited by power passing from a decadent and tyrannical hereditary monarch to a strong and vigorous Barbarian usurper.



Introduction: How Real Is History?

Cahill chose an apt question. It's well known that history is usually written by the conquerors, not the conquered, and is therefore automatically suspect. But we do have a few little bones to pick with some of his answers.

Excerpt from the Introduction:

"The word Irish is seldom coupled with the word civilization. When we think of peoples as civilized or civilizing, the Egyptians and the Greeks, the Italians and the French, the Chinese and the Jews may all come to mind. The Irish are wild, feckless, and charming, or morose, repressed, and corrupt, but not especially civilized." (*See article on Civilization below.*)

We disagree. Sitting in a cozy Irish pub, in the company of poets, with a pint of Guinness to hand, seems very civilized.

Another excerpt:

"Ireland (is) a little island at the edge of Europe that has known neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment—in some ways, a Third World country with, as John Betjeman claimed, a Stone Age culture..."

We aren't historians but we do know that the Stone Age ended somewhere around 4000 BCE. That comment of Betjeman's is not only ridiculous but incredibly insulting. As to Cahill's opening, we have read current articles which describe both a Renaissance and an Enlightenment in Ireland.

For the Renaissance, go online to:

<https://www.historicalindex.org/what-was-the-irish-renaissance.htm>
to read *What Was the Irish Renaissance?* by Licia Morrow.

For the Enlightenment, enter "Was there an Enlightenment in Ireland?" in any online search engine and you will find several articles confirming that Ireland was enlightened some time ago.

We found the following summary:

"Yes, there was an Enlightenment in Ireland, characterized by influential thinkers like Jonathan Swift, Edmund Burke, and George Berkeley, who contributed to literature, philosophy, and politics. However, it was distinct from the Scottish Enlightenment, focusing more on issues of toleration and skepticism about moral progress due to Ireland's unique political and social challenges."

One of Ireland's challenges was being conquered by the English and subjected to intense racism and prejudice, as happens with most, if not all, conquered peoples. (*See the article on Civilization below, re India, Australia, and Native Americans.*) Cahill lists several examples of prejudice, including from Benjamin Disraeli and the historian Charles Kingsley.

civilization

The most literal definition of the word civilization is "a society made up of cities." More broadly, civilization means a society with a relatively high level of cultural, technological, and scientific development, the extensive use of record-keeping, and the appearance of complex political and social institutions. It can also mean refinement of thought, manners, and taste.

The word civilization comes from Latin: *civilis*, (civil), related to *civis* (citizen) and *civitas* (city). As the National Geographic Society has explained it: "This is why the most basic definition of the word civilization is 'a society made up of cities.'" The earliest emergence of civilizations is generally connected with the final stages of the Neolithic Revolution in West Asia, culminating in the relatively rapid process of urban growth and state formation, a political development associated with the appearance of a governing elite.

Mesopotamia is the site of the earliest civilizations developing from 7,400 years ago. This area has been evaluated as having inspired some of the most important developments in human history including the invention of the wheel, the building of the earliest cities and the development of written cursive script. Such development also inspired the appearance of a warrior, or soldier, class and endemic warfare (a state of continual or frequent warfare), the rapid development of hierarchies, and the use of human sacrifice.

Generally, civilization contrasts with non-centralized tribal societies, including the cultures of nomadic pastoralists, Neolithic societies, or hunter-gatherers. The idea of civilization implies a progression or development from a previous "uncivilized" state. Traditionally, cultures that defined themselves as "civilized" often did so in contrast to other societies or human groupings viewed as less civilized, calling the latter barbarians, savages, and primitives.

For example, in Australia, British settlers justified the displacement of Indigenous Australians by observing that the land appeared uncultivated and wild, which to them reflected that the inhabitants were not civilized enough to "improve" it.

Another example is India, which has been home to many powerful and internationally influential societies for five millennia. These societies made enormous advances in science, technology, arts, and commerce. Their culture was deemed uncivilized, a judgment that the colonizers used as justification for subjugating the Indian population. In this case, and many others, the idea of civilization contributed to generations of violence by "civilized" societies against "uncivilized" societies.

A third example: American Indians were categorized as savages for centuries,

ever since European invaders first arrived in the 1400s. European invaders viewed the Native Americans as savages due to their unfamiliar cultural practices, their non-Christian beliefs, and their race. Some American Indian societies, particularly in North America, were nomadic. Colonizers saw the nomadic lifestyle as very primitive, a sentiment still echoed today.

Peter Heather argues in his book *The Fall of the Roman Empire: a New History of Rome and the Barbarians* that this civilization did not end for moral or economic reasons, but because centuries of contact with barbarians across the frontier generated its own nemesis by making the barbarians a more sophisticated and dangerous adversary. The fact that Rome needed to generate ever greater revenues to equip and re-equip armies that were for the first time repeatedly defeated in the field, led to the dismemberment of the Empire.

Ireland

Ireland is the second-largest island of the British Isles, situated in Northwestern Europe. Its geography comprises low-lying mountains surrounding a central plain, with several navigable rivers extending inland. The lush vegetation is a product of a mild, rainy climate and the extensive grasslands create a green-hued landscape that gave birth to the popular nickname *Emerald Isle*.

The names Ireland and Éire both derive from Old Irish Ériu, which in turn comes from a Proto-Celtic word meaning "fertile soil." The Classical Latin name, Ivernia, comes from this same root but is usually spelled "Hibernia."

The earliest evidence of human activity in Ireland is dated to 33,000 years ago. Some time prior to 4,000 BCE, Neolithic settlers introduced cereal cultivars, domesticated animals such as cattle and sheep, built large timber buildings and stone monuments. An extensive field system was developed, arguably the oldest in the world, consisting of small divisions separated by dry-stone walls. Wheat and barley were the principal crops.

How and when the island became Celtic has been long debated, with the migrations of the Celts being one of the more enduring themes of archaeological and linguistic studies. The most recent genetic research dates the spread of Indo-European languages (including Celtic) to around the middle of the third millennium BCE.

In contrast to many similarly functioning tribal societies, prequest Ireland was not in any sense "primitive." A highly complex society, for centuries it was the most advanced, scholarly, and civilized in all of Western Europe. The "tuath" system functioned well.

The tuath is a body of persons voluntarily united for socially beneficial purposes and the sum total of the landed properties of its members constituted its territorial dimension. All "freemen" who owned land, all professionals, and all craftsmen, were entitled to become members of a tuath. Each tuath's members formed an annual assembly which decided all common policies, declared war or peace on other tuatha, and elected or deposed their kings. In contrast to primitive tribes, no one was bound to a given tuath, either because of kinship or of geographical location. Individual members were free to, and often did, secede from a tuath and join a competing tuath. The king had no political power; he could not decree or administer justice or declare war. Basically he was a priest and militia leader, and presided over the tuath assemblies.

The *Chronicle of Ireland* records that St. Patrick, Ireland's best known patron saint, arrived in 432 CE. Irish Christian scholars excelled in the study of Latin and Greek learning and Christian theology. The Hiberno-Scottish missions, begun by the Irish monk St. Columba, spread the Irish vision of Christianity to pagan England and the Frankish Empire. These missions brought written language to an illiterate population of Europe during the centuries that followed the fall of Rome, earning Ireland another nickname, "the island of saints and scholars."

The Vikings held sway for better than two centuries during the mid-Medieval period. Following the 12th-century Anglo-Norman invasion, England claimed sovereignty. The Great Famine of 1845–1851 devastated Ireland, when more than one million people died from starvation and disease, with an additional million people emigrating during the famine, mostly to the US and Canada. In the century that followed, an economic depression caused by the famine resulted in a further million people emigrating. A war of independence in the early 20th century was followed by the partition of the island into the Irish Free State (now a republic), and Northern Ireland, which remained a part of the United Kingdom.

The earliest known Irish graphic art and sculpture are Neolithic carvings found at sites such as Newgrange. In the Middle Ages, the arts of manuscript illumination, metalworking and sculpture produced treasures such as the Book of Kells, ornate jewelry and the many carved stone crosses that still dot the island today.

Since then, especially in the field of literature, Irish culture has had a significant influence on other cultures. Poetry in Irish is among the oldest vernacular poetry in Europe, with the earliest examples dating from the 6th century. In the 20th century, Ireland produced four winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature: George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. James Joyce is widely considered to be one of the most

significant writers of the 20th century.

Music, too, has been in evidence in Ireland since prehistoric times. Outside religious establishments, musical genres in early Gaelic Ireland are referred to as a triad of weeping music (goltraige), laughing music (geantraige), and sleeping music (suantraige). The Irish harp, in particular, was of such significance that it became Ireland's national symbol.

Ireland has produced its share of philosophers and scientists. Among them is the Irish philosopher and theologian Johannes Scotus Eriugena, who was considered one of the leading intellectuals of the early Middle Ages. Another is Robert Boyle, a 17th-century natural philosopher, chemist, physicist, and inventor. Ireland is also noted for physicists John Tyndall, Father Nicholas Joseph Callan, and Ernest Walton, winner of the 1951 Nobel Prize in Physics.

Alongside mainstream Western culture (which includes many popular sports), a strong Celtic culture exists, as expressed through Gaelic games, Irish music, Irish language, and Irish dance. And, of course, there is a wealth of folklore, from tales of tiny leprechauns with hidden pots of gold to that of the patron saint, Patrick, with his legendary ridding the island of snakes and his reputed use of the three-leaved shamrock as a symbol for the Christian Trinity.

Although Ireland is now both urbanized and Europeanized, its culture retains many unique characteristics, and its people prize folkloric and social traditions that largely derive from and celebrate the country's rural past. In *Meditations in Time of Civil War*, William Butler Yeats, perhaps Ireland's best-known poet, evokes the idyllic and idealized countryside, a place central to the memories of the country's millions of expatriates and their descendants.



Chapter I: The End of the World

The fall of the Roman Empire was not a sudden event. The imperial power wielded by Rome decreased gradually over the course of centuries, during which time a steady deterioration was punctuated by repeated barbarian incursions and the sacking of cities. The reach of the empire shrank by fits and starts until it was overthrown entirely and replaced by kingdoms ruled by the Germanic invaders.

During the course of the fall of Rome, a significant event took place: the freezing of the Rhine on December 31st, 406. This allowed thousands of Germanic invaders to cross the frozen river and overrun Gaul, after which they were well-positioned to invade the Italian peninsula and sack Rome itself just a few years later.

Excerpt from the chapter:

"That Rome should ever fall was unthinkable to Romans: its foundations were unassailable, sturdily sunk in a storied past and steadily built on for eleven centuries and more. There was, of course, the prophecy."

Cahill is referring to the Prophecy of the Twelve Eagles, a belief among Romans that each eagle represented a century, suggesting (at the time the prophecy was made) that Rome had only seventy years left before its fall. This prophecy was often recounted in a context of drunkenness and despair, reflecting the Romans' deep-seated fear of their empire's decline.

The eagle was revered in Roman culture and a powerful emblem of Roman identity. It symbolized strength, courage, and dominion, qualities that were highly regarded in Roman society. The eagle represented the might of the Roman state and the virtues of the Roman people. The eagle was featured in the military standards, known as the Aquila. Each legion carried an eagle standard into battle, signifying their honor and unity. The loss of an eagle in battle was considered a grave dishonor.

prophecy

In religion, mythology, and fiction, a prophecy is a message that has been communicated to a person (typically called a prophet) by a supernatural entity. In everyday life, it is simply an ordinary guess or prediction about the future. The word comes from the Greek *prophetia* — literally, "gift of interpreting the will of the gods."

The prophet is often associated with the priest, the shaman, the diviner (foreteller), and the mystic. In ancient Rome, one of the most significant civilizations in human history, the role of prophecy was particularly notable. Prophecy was not merely an esoteric belief; it played a crucial role in shaping public policy, military decisions, and religious practices.

Excerpt from the chapter:

"Rome fell because of inner weakness, either social or spiritual..."

spiritual

The word "spiritual" refers to matters related to the "spirit" or "soul." It is often used to describe people who aren't concerned with material or worldly things and also those belonging to a religion. It encompasses a search for meaning in life and can involve beliefs in supernatural phenomena or a sense of interconnectedness with the world. The word may also refer to a religious

folk song of African-American origin.

The term spirit means "animating or vital principle in man and animals." It is derived from the Old French *esprit*, which comes from the Latin word *spiritus* (soul, ghost, courage, vigor, breath) and is related to *spirare* (to breathe).

"Spirit" was used in the late Medieval period in a non-theological sense of "essential principle of something" (as in Spirit of St. Louis). Later it came to mean "character, disposition; way of thinking and feeling, state of mind; source of a human desire." In Medieval alchemy, spirit was used to mean a "volatile substance; distillate." Hence it came to refer to strong alcoholic liquor. This also is the sense in a spirit level, so called for the liquid in the clear tube.

"Spiritualism" means advocacy of the existence of spirit as distinct from matter or as the only reality (opposed to materialism). The table-rapping sense, "belief that spirits of the dead can communicate with the living via a medium" came into use in 1853.

Traditionally, spirituality referred to a religious process of re-formation which "aims to recover the original shape of man," supposed to be in "the image of God" as exemplified by the founders and sacred texts of the religions of the world.

In ancient Rome, the concept of spirituality consisted mainly of the *pax deorum* (the peace of the gods) that was achieved through rituals and festivals that ensured divine favor and cosmic order. Myths served as allegories for moral lessons and models for personal conduct, guiding individuals in their relationship with the gods. Pythagorean philosophy encouraged introspection, self-discipline, and ethical living. This blend of myth, philosophy, and ritual shaped a spirituality focused on both societal harmony and personal connection with the divine.

It has been suggested that modern spirituality is a blend of humanistic psychology, mystical and esoteric traditions, and Eastern religions.

The distinction between the spiritual and the religious became more common in the popular mind during the late 20th century with the rise of secularism and the advent of the New Age movement. Authors such as Chris Griscom and Shirley MacLaine explored it in numerous ways in their books. Paul Heelas noted the development within New Age circles of what he called "seminar spirituality": structured offerings complementing consumer choice with spiritual options.



Chapter II: What was Lost

Excerpts from Cahill's description of how life changed for Romans after the fall of Rome:

"The Romans kept their lives, most of them. But sooner or later they or their progeny lost almost everything else: titles, property, way of life, learning — especially learning. A world in chaos is not a world in which books are copied and libraries maintained. It is not a world where learned men have the leisure to become more learned."

"Curiales and other middle-class townsmen, who had been accustomed to sending their infants to be nursed by shepherds in pure mountain air, began to find it impossible to retrieve those children. Snatched away to inaccessible mountain fastnesses, the children were raised brutally as shepherd-slaves, and the name 'shepherd' became synonymous with thief, kidnapper, trafficker in children. The fear of such kidnapping still finds echoes in the lost children and loathsome adults who haunt the deep wood of European fairy tales."

shepherd

A shepherd is a person who herds, guards, and tends sheep. It may also mean a person who guides a group of people, or a breed of dog called a German shepherd. The word comes from the Old English *sceaphierde*: sheepherder.

Shepherding is among the oldest occupations, beginning some 5,000 years ago in Asia Minor. Sheep were kept for their milk (often used to make cheese), their meat and especially their wool. Because the occupation is so widespread, many religions and cultures have symbolic or metaphorical references to shepherds.

Shepherds usually lived apart from society, the job of sheepherding being largely nomadic. They were customarily buried with a tuft of wool in hand, to prove on Doomsday their occupation and be excused for often missing Sunday church. "Shepherd's pie" is so called because the meat in it was typically mutton or lamb, though today, it can be any kind of meat.



Chapter III: A Shifting World of Darkness

"Even at this early stage of their development, the Irish were intoxicated by the power of words. Every noble Irish family

maintained a family of ancestral poets."

"This was an illiterate, aristocratic, seminomadic, Iron Age warrior culture, its wealth based on animal husbandry and slavery (the importance of both of which one cannot fail to notice in the Tain's royal inventory). Such cultures have been known to exist for many hundreds of years without undergoing appreciable alteration. What normally changes them is outside influence, rather than inner dynamics; and Ireland, splendidly isolated in the Atlantic and largely beyond the traffic of civilization, suffered few intrusive influences. We can safely assume, therefore, that the world of Medb and Ailil was little different from the earlier Ireland that the Celtic invaders had made and that this world, in most respects, remained intact into the century of Rome's fall."

Tain

Táin Bó Cúailnge, commonly known as *The Táin* or less commonly as *The Cattle Raid of Cooley*, is an epic from Irish mythology. It is traditionally set in the 1st century in a pagan heroic age, and is the central text of a group of tales known as the Ulster Cycle. It has been influential on Irish literature and culture and is often considered Ireland's national epic. Like most other early Irish literature, *The Táin* is written in prosimetrum, i.e. prose with periodic additions of verse composed by the characters.

The *Táin* tells of a war against Ulster by Queen Medb of Connacht and her husband King Ailill, who intend to steal the stud bull Donn Cuailnge. Due to a curse upon the king and warriors of Ulster, the invaders are opposed only by the young demigod, Cú Chulainn.

Queen Medb

Medb (often anglicized as Maeve) is queen of Connacht in the Ulster Cycle of Irish mythology. Her husband in the core stories of the cycle is Ailill mac Máta, although she had several husbands before him who were also kings of Connacht. She rules from Cruachan (now Rathcroghan, County Roscommon).

Medb, insistent that she be equal in wealth with her husband, discovered that Ailill was one powerful stud bull richer than her. Thus, she started the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) to steal Ulster's prize stud bull Donn Cúailnge.

Queen Medb is strong-willed, ambitious, cunning, and promiscuous, and is an archetypal warrior queen. She is believed by some to be a manifestation of the sovereignty goddess and may be identical with Medb Lethderg, the

sovereignty goddess of Tara. Queen Medb demanded three things of all her suitors and husbands: that there be no fear, meanness, or jealousy towards her. She had many lovers, a testament to her beauty and desirability.



Chapter IV: Good News From Far Off

Cahill discusses St. Patrick's life history and his work in the Christian church.

St. Patrick

St. Patrick was a fifth-century Romano-British Christian missionary and bishop in Ireland. Known as the "Apostle of Ireland," he is that country's primary patron saint. He is venerated as a saint in the Catholic Church as well as several others. We're all familiar with his feast day, the 17th of March (sometimes called the 17th of Ireland), which commemorates his supposed date of death.

Patrick was born at the end of Roman rule in Britain. The dates of his life cannot be fixed with certainty, but there is general agreement that he was active as a missionary in Ireland during the fifth century. According to tradition dating from the early Middle Ages, Patrick was the first bishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, and is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland (despite evidence of some earlier Christian presence on the island), and converting Ireland from paganism in the process.

Patrick's father, Calpurnius, is described as a decurion (senator and tax collector) of an unspecified Romano-British city, and as a deacon; his grandfather Potitus was a priest from Bonaven Tabernia. However, Patrick's confession states he was not an active believer in his youth, and considered himself in that period to be "idle and callow."

When Patrick was about sixteen, he was captured by Irish pirates from his home in Britain and taken as a slave to Ireland. He writes that he lived there for six years as an animal herder before escaping and returning to his family. After becoming a cleric, he returned to spread Christianity in northern and western Ireland. In later life, he served as a bishop, but little is known about where he worked. By the seventh century, he had already come to be revered as the patron saint of Ireland.

Two Latin works survive which are generally accepted as having been written by St. Patrick. These are the Declaration (Latin: *Confessio*) and the Letter to the soldiers of Coroticus (Latin: *Epistola*), from which come the only generally accepted details of his life. The Declaration is the more biographical of the two. In it, Patrick gives a short account of his life and his mission. Most

available details of his life are from subsequent hagiographies and annals, which have considerable value but lack the empiricism scholars depend on today.

decurion

A decurion was an officer in the ancient Roman army responsible for commanding a squadron of cavalry, typically consisting of around 30 men. Additionally, in later periods, the term also referred to a member of a city or town council in ancient Rome. The emergence of the post of decurion in Latin colonies may be found in Rome's decision in 125 BCE to allow office-holders to become Roman citizens in an attempt to create loyalty.

Decurions were the most powerful political figures at the local level. They were responsible for public contracts, religious rituals, entertainment, and ensuring order. Perhaps most importantly to the imperial government, they also supervised local tax collection.

callow

"Callow" is an adjective used to describe an immature person lacking in life experience or a bald, unfledged, young bird.

The word callow comes from the Old English word *calu*, which meant "bald or featherless." It was used to describe young, fledgling birds. "Callow" was applied to bald land too—that is, land denuded of vegetation or not producing it in the first place. Over time, the meaning expanded to include young, inexperienced people. Think of the callow youth as people who haven't tested their wings yet.

hagiography

A "hagiography" is a biography of a saint or an ecclesiastical leader. It is often adulatory and idealized. Christian hagiographies focus on the lives, and notably the miracles, ascribed to men and women canonized by various churches. Other religions also create hagiographical texts concerning individuals believed to be imbued with sacred power.

Hagiographic works, especially those of the Middle Ages, can incorporate a record of institutional and local history, and evidence of popular cults, customs, and traditions. Many of the important hagiographical texts composed in medieval England were written in the vernacular dialect Anglo-Norman. With the introduction of Latin literature into England in the 7th and 8th centuries, the genre of the life of the saint grew increasingly popular. It shares certain common features with popular heroic poems, such as Beowulf. Both

genres focus on the hero-warrior figure, but with the distinction that the religious figure is spiritual rather than swinging a sword.

The word is composed of two parts. "Hagio" comes from a Greek word that meant "holy, sacred" in Ancient Greek. The second part of hagiography is familiar: the combining form "-graphy," which comes from the Greek verb *graphein*, meaning "to write." It is found in biography and calligraphy, among many others. Today, hagiography can refer to biography of actual saints, but it is more typically applied to biography that treats ordinary human subjects as if they were saints.



Chapter V: A Solid World of Light

"Of the many legends surrounding Patrick, few can be authenticated. He did not chase the snakes out of Ireland. There is no way of knowing whether he used the shamrock to explain the Trinity."

"Even Patrick's great prayer in Irish — sometimes called *Saint Patrick's Breastplate* because it was thought to protect him from hostile powers, sometimes called *The Deer's Cry* because it was thought to make him resemble a deer to the eyes of those seeking to do him harm — cannot be definitely ascribed to him."

St. Patrick's Breastplate

St. Patrick's Breastplate is an Old Irish prayer attributed to St. Patrick, serving as a protective invocation that calls upon the strength of the Trinity and various elements of creation for guidance and safety. It reflects a deep Christian faith and is often recited for protection during journeys or in times of need.

Its title is given as *Faeth Fiada* in the 11th-century *Liber Hymnorum* that records the text. This has been interpreted as the "Deer's Cry" by Middle Irish popular etymology, but it is more likely a term for a "spell of concealment."

Excerpt from the chapter:

"There is not a hero in ancient Irish literature who does not fall prey to some taboo or another—geis, the Irish called it (gessa in the plural), a word that may perhaps be translated as 'observance.' We are familiar with such Iron Age observances from the land mines and booby traps of the Greek myths: Achilles's heel, his one bit of vulnerability, is what proves fatal to him; Oedipus's prophesied fate—that he will murder his father and sleep with his mother—turns

out to be inescapable, though he does everything he can to avoid it. But in the Irish stories the traps seem to lie hidden at every crossroads, and trickster-gods lurk behind each tree."

geis or geas

A geis or geas (plural: geasa) is a type of taboo or prohibition in Irish mythology, often associated with a vow or curse, which can bring power or misfortune depending on whether it is observed or violated. It typically involves specific obligations or restrictions placed on a person, especially heroes in folklore and in modern fantasy fiction. The word originated in Old Irish.

A geas can be compared with a curse or, paradoxically, a gift. If someone under a geas violates the associated taboo, the infractor will suffer dishonor or even death. Conversely, the observing of one's geas is believed to bring power. Often, women place geasa upon men; in some cases, the woman turns out to be a goddess or other sovereignty figure.

The geas is often a key device in hero tales, such as that of Cú Chulainn in Irish mythology. Traditionally, the doom of heroes comes about due to their violation of their geas either by accident or by having multiple geasa, which then come into conflict. For instance, Cú Chulainn has a geas to never eat dog meat, and he is also bound by a geas to eat any food offered to him by a woman. When a hag offers him dog meat, he has no way to emerge from the situation unscathed; this leads to his death.

In the Irish saga of Conchobar mac Nessa, the king is said to have the right to the first night with any marriageable woman and the right to sleep with the wife of anyone who hosted him. This is called the Geis of the king. Whether this right actually existed and was exercised by the Celts is not attested outside the sagas. It is similar to the *droit du seigneur* of feudal Europe.

Geasa or prohibitions were, and are still, common among all people, but today they are usually called superstitions.

Excerpt from the chapter:

"The difference between Patrick's magic and the magic of the druids is that in Patrick's world all beings and events come from the hand of a good God, who loves human beings and wishes them success."

good

The term "good" generally refers to something that is pleasing, desirable,

satisfactory, beneficial, or of high quality. It can also denote moral righteousness or virtue, as the opposite of what is considered bad or evil. Good comes from an old German root for gathering, and in its original sense it means that something fits well. If something is good for you, it fits you well, or is healthy for you to eat or, as your grandmother might say, improves your character.

The above definition seems to cover all the bases. There are, no doubt, many trillions of items, people, and situations that are pleasing, desirable, satisfactory, beneficial, or of high quality and therefore described as "good"(Good morning!). The adjective "good" is standard after linking verbs like taste, smell, look, feel, be, and seem (Everything tastes good. You're looking good today.).

The word is also used in a number of informal ways. For example:
willingness: "I'm good for another round of golf."
exclamatory phrases: "Good grief, Charlie Brown!"
traditional descriptions: "the good ship *America*"
expression of approval: "Good! Now we can eat."

Then there are the phrases:

- a good one: an unbelievable assertion
- as good as: practically, nearly
- as good as gold: of the highest worth; well-behaved
- but good (an intensive): "that pipe is leaking but good"
- come good: to recover after a setback
- for good (and all): forever
- good and: very; "when I'm good and ready"
- good for: beneficial; certain to repay money owed
- good on you: a term of congratulations
- good to go: ready for use or for an activity
- good turn: a good deed
- have a good mind to: have a strong desire to do something
- in good with: in a favored position
- make good: be successful or to recompense
- no good: worthless, useless
- the good: the ideal of goodness or morality
- to the good: for the best

And last, but not least: Good luck!



Chapter VI: What was Found

"Ireland is unique in religious history for being the only land into

which Christianity was introduced without bloodshed. There are no Irish martyrs (at least not till Elizabeth I began to create them eleven centuries after Patrick). And this lack of martyrdom troubled the Irish, to whom a glorious death by violence presented such an exciting finale. If all Ireland had received Christianity without a fight, the Irish would just have to think up some new form of martyrdom—something even more interesting than the wonderfully grisly stories they had begun to learn in the simple continental collections, called 'martyrologies,' from which Patrick and his successors taught them to read. The Irish of the late fifth and early sixth centuries soon found a solution, which they called the Green Martyrdom, opposing it to the conventional Red Martyrdom by blood."

martyrdom

Martyrdom is the suffering or death of a martyr, often due to their adherence to a particular cause or religious belief. It signifies extreme suffering or torment endured for the sake of one's faith or principles.

The root of martyrdom is the Greek word *martur*, which means "witness." The suffix *-dom* means "state or condition." In a religious context, people who experience martyrdom bear witness for their faith and suffer or die because of their beliefs. Martyrdom is also tied with nationalism, because a martyr can be a person who died in the context of national struggle.

In early Irish Christianity, martyrdom was not limited to shedding blood for the faith. *The Cambrai Homily*, the oldest known Irish homily from the early 7th century, explains that there is actually a unique triad of "colored" martyrdoms for Catholics.

White martyrdom is characterized by a complete separation from worldly attachments for the sake of God. This does not necessarily involve physical suffering, but demands a life of strict asceticism. Early Christian hermits and monks embraced this path, leaving behind all they loved to devote themselves entirely to spiritual pursuits.

Blue (or green) martyrdom involves rigorous self-denial through fasting and penance. It requires individuals to control their desires and perform acts of repentance without necessarily withdrawing from society. This accounts for why many Irish monks sought out places of extreme solitude and harsh weather. The monastery atop Skellig Michael is a perfect example of both.

Red martyrdom is the most traditional form, involving violent death or severe persecution. This type of martyrdom was relatively rare in early Christian

Ireland, becoming more common during periods of Viking invasions. It signifies the ultimate sacrifice, where individuals shed their blood for the defense and spread of the Catholic faith.

Excerpt from the chapter:

"The Irish received literacy in their own way, as something to play with. The only alphabet they'd ever known was prehistoric Ogham, a cumbersome set of lines based on the Roman alphabet, which they incised laboriously into the corners of standing stones to turn them into memorials. These rune-like inscriptions, which continued to appear in the early years of the Christian period, hardly suggested what would happen next, for within a generation the Irish had mastered Latin and even Greek and, as best they could, were picking up some Hebrew. As we have seen already, they devised Irish grammars, and copied out the whole of their native oral literature. All this was fairly straightforward, too straightforward once they'd got the hang of it. They began to make up languages. The members of a far-flung secret society, formed as early as the late fifth century (barely a generation after the Irish had become literate), could write to one another in impenetrably erudite, never-before-spoken patterns of Latin, called *Hisperica Fantina* [sic], not unlike the dream-language of *Finnegans Wake* or even the languages J. R. R. Tolkien would one day make up for his hobbits and elves."

Ogham

"Ogham" is the writing system of fifth and sixth century Irish in which an alphabet of 20 letters is represented by notches for vowels and lines for consonants and which is known principally from inscriptions cut on the edges of rough standing tombstones. The etymology is unclear.

One of the stranger ancient scripts one might come across, Ogham is also known as the 'Celtic Tree Alphabet.' It was used to write in Archaic Irish, Old Welsh, and Latin mostly on wood and stone, and it is based on a high medieval Briatharogam tradition of ascribing the name of trees to individual characters. The inscriptions containing Ogham are almost exclusively made up of personal names and marks of land ownership.

There are roughly 400 surviving inscriptions on stone monuments throughout Ireland and western Britain, the bulk of which are in southern areas of the Irish province of Munster.

Hisperica Famina

Hisperica Famina, meaning "Western Orations," is a collection of seventh-century Latin orations that serve as a textbook on rhetoric and composition, showcasing a unique style of Hiberno-Latin. These works are characterized by their poetic form and incorporation of various linguistic influences, including Greek and Hebrew. Hisperica is understood as a portmanteau word combining Hibernia, Ireland, and Hesperides, the semi-legendary "Western Isles;" the coinage is typical of the wordplay used by its authors.

It has been suggested that the unusual vocabulary of the poems was the result of the monks learning Latin words from dictionaries and glossaries which did not distinguish between obscure and common words; unlike many others in Western Europe at the time, the Irish monks did not speak a language descended from Latin. During the sixth and seventh centuries CE, Irish monasticism spread through Christian Europe; Irish monks who founded these monasteries often brought Hiberno-Latin literary styles with them.

Excerpts from the chapter:

"At the outset there were in Ireland no scriptoria to speak of ... (As late as the ninth century an Irish annotator describes himself as writing under a greenwood tree while listening to a clear-voiced cuckoo hopping from bush to bush.)"

"The Irish combined the stately letters of the Greek and Roman alphabets with the talismanic, spellbinding simplicity of Ogham to produce initial capitals and headings that rivet one's eyes to the page and hold the reader in awe. As late as the twelfth century, Geraldus Cambrensis was forced to conclude that the Book of Kells was 'the work of an angel, not of a man.'

For the body of the text, the Irish developed two hands, one a dignified but rounded script called Irish half-uncial, the other an easy-to-write script called Irish minuscule that was more readable, more fluid, and, well, happier than anything devised by the Romans. Recommended by its ease and readability, this second hand would be adopted by a great many scribes far beyond the borders of Ireland, becoming the common script of the Middle Ages."

scriptorium

A scriptorium (plural: scriptoria) was a writing room in some medieval European monasteries for the writing, copying, and illuminating of manuscripts by scribes. Not all who worked in scriptoria were monks; lay scribes and illuminators from outside the monastic foundation reinforced the clerical scribes. By the later Middle Ages secular manuscript workshops were common, and many monasteries bought more books than they produced

themselves.

When monastic institutions arose in the early sixth century (the first European monastic writing dates from 517), they defined European literary culture and selectively preserved the literary history of the West. Monks copied Jerome's Latin Vulgate Bible and the commentaries and letters of early Church Fathers for missionary purposes as well as for use within the monastery.

In the copying process, there was typically a division of labor among the monks who readied the parchment for copying by smoothing and chalking the surface, those who ruled the parchment and copied the text, and those who illuminated the text. Sometimes a single monk would engage in all of these stages to prepare a manuscript. Recent studies indicate that scriptoria developed in relative isolation, to the extent that paleographers can sometimes identify the product of each writing center and to date it accordingly.

There is evidence that women scribes, in religious or secular contexts, produced texts in the medieval period. Chelles Abbey, established in France during the early medieval period, was well known for its scriptorium, where nuns produced manuscripts and religious texts. There were also women who worked as professional, secular scribes, including Clara Hätzlerin in 15th century Augsburg, who has at least nine surviving manuscripts signed by or attributed to her.

uncial

"Uncial" (or majuscule script) is a style of writing characterized by somewhat rounded capital letters and found especially in Greek and Latin manuscripts of the fourth to the eighth century CE. These letters were seldom used after the 10th century CE, being superseded by the cursive style.

Insular script

"Insular script" refers to a medieval script system, originating in Ireland, that spread to England and continental Europe under the influence of Irish Christianity. Irish missionaries took the script to continental Europe, where they founded monasteries. It is associated with Insular art, of which most surviving examples are illuminated manuscripts. It greatly influenced modern Gaelic type and handwriting.

The scripts developed in Ireland in the 7th century and were used as late as the 19th century, though its most flourishing period fell between 600 and 850. They were closely related to the uncial and half-uncial scripts, their immediate influences.

script

"Script" comes from the Latin *scribĕre*, meaning "to write," and all its meanings have to do with something written. Handwriting is script. The written version of what is said on stage is a script. Even a grocery list is a script. It can be a verb; thus you can script a play. It can also refer to a set of instructions in computer programming that automates tasks.

Excerpts from the chapter:

"Codex was used originally to distinguish a book, as we know it today, from its ancestor, the scroll."

"The most famous Irish codex is the Book of Kells, kept in the library of Trinity College, Dublin."

codex

In the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, the "codex" (plural: codices) were replacing the older scroll as the preferred form for longer writings. Unlike the scroll, this wonderful invention of binding pages together at one edge, along the side of the text, permitted writing on both sides of a sheet, made it easier to locate a particular passage, and could contain a very long piece of writing. Codices were usually written on parchment, the specially prepared skin of a sheep or goat, or papyrus, the ancestor of paper. Because codices were handwritten, there were few copies of any single codex, and sometimes only a single copy. The modern book has kept basically the same form as the original codices. The word is now also used for a collection or digest of laws.

"Codex" is a variant of Latin *caudex*, meaning "trunk of a tree" or "block of wood." This was also the word for a book made of thin wooden strips coated with wax upon which one wrote. The gradual replacement of the scroll by the codex has been called the most important advance in book making before the invention of the printing press. By the sixth century, the scroll had almost vanished as a medium for literature.

The earliest surviving fragments from codices come from Egypt. By the first century BCE, there existed at Rome notebooks made of leaves of parchment, used for rough copy, first drafts, and notes. By the first century CE, such manuals were used for commercial copies of classical literature. The Christians adopted this parchment manual format for the Scriptures used in their liturgy and, by the early second century, all Scripture was reproduced in codex form.

The Roman poet, Martial, praised the form of the codex, as well as the

convenience with which such a book could be read on a journey, taking less space than a scroll and being more comfortable to hold in one hand.

The Book of Kells is an example of a codex that was created during the Middle Ages.

The Book of Kells

The *Book of Kells* is a beautifully illustrated manuscript, containing the four Gospels of the New Testament in Latin. Created circa 800 AD, it is renowned for its intricate artwork and is considered one of the greatest treasures of medieval Europe. It is currently housed at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

The *Book* is regarded as a masterwork of Western calligraphy and the pinnacle of Insular illumination. The manuscript takes its name from the Abbey of Kells, County Meath, which was its home for centuries.

The decoration combines traditional Christian iconography with the ornate swirling motifs typical of Insular art. Figures of humans, animals and mythical beasts, together with Celtic knots and interlacing patterns in vibrant colors, enliven the manuscript's pages. Many of these minor decorative elements are imbued with Christian symbolism and so further emphasize the themes of the major illustrations.

The manuscript comprises 340 leaves, thus 680 pages of high-quality calf vellum. The lettering is in iron gall ink, and the colors used were derived from a wide range of substances, some of which were imported from distant lands.

St. Finnian of Clonard

St. Finnian of Clonard was an early Irish monastic saint, born in 470, who founded Clonard Abbey in County Meath around 520. He is known as a teacher of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland and played a significant role in the development of Irish monasticism, attracting many students to his monastery.

St. Patrick's experience showed that the imitation of Christ in humility, poverty, and hardship appealed to the Irish character. In the early 6th century, influences favorable to monasticism reached Ireland from Britain. In a land whose political organization did not depend on cities, the monastery easily became the center from which the bishop ruled, and the monks were encouraged to take the place once held by the druids as teachers of youth.

The most important name in this vigorous movement is St. Finnian of Clonard, called in later literature Magister, in Latin, and in Irish, "the teacher of all Ireland in his day."

More than 100 monasteries of major significance were founded during the 6th century in every part of the country and on the coastal islands. Women showed themselves capable of equal idealism. Thus a large proportion of the population of the country lived in monastic seclusion as monks and nuns.



Chapter VII: The End of the World

"The Saxon monasteries, often founded by Irish monks, learned from them the scribal arts and reverence for the written word. The Lindisfarne Gospels, as consummate an example of Irish scribal art as the *Book of Kells*, is the work of Eadfrith, successor to Aidan as abbot of Lindisfarne... . Though the Lindisfarne Gospels, almost the only codex for which we have a scribe's name, is the work of an Englishman, it is utterly Irish in spirit."

Lindisfarne Gospels

The *Lindisfarne Gospels* is an illuminated manuscript gospel book probably produced around the years 715–720 in the monastery at Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumberland. The manuscript is considered one of the finest works in the unique style of Hiberno-Saxon or Insular art, combining Mediterranean, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic elements.

Excerpt from the chapter:

"Charlemagne presided over medieval Europe's first Renaissance, a short-lived cultural flowering that barely outlasted his reign. His enduring influence lay in the gradual revival of literacy, for he repeatedly urged (and supported) the raising of standards in the few poor continental schools that remained. That he himself was an illiterate, who late in life laboriously learned to decipher some simple texts but could never get the hang of writing, is proof enough of the standards of the age.

"Without the previous (and continuing) influx of Irish codices, the Carolingian Renaissance would have been impossible. For this reason, as Charlemagne's biographer Einhard tells us, Charlemagne *amabat peregrinos* (loved the wandering monks)."

Charlemagne

Charlemagne (748 – 814) was a skilled military strategist and spent much of his reign engaged in warfare in order to accomplish his goals. In 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Holy Roman Emperor. In this role, he

encouraged the Carolingian Renaissance, a cultural and intellectual revival in Europe. Today, Charlemagne is referred to by some as the father of Europe.

The Carolingian Renaissance led to the preservation and reproduction of ancient texts and fostered new works in theology, philosophy, and literature. This period played a crucial role in preserving ancient knowledge and transmitting it to future generations.



Mysteries of the Middle Ages

True Stories from the Medieval World

In *Mysteries of the Middle Ages*, author E.B. Wheeler explores the history of the Medieval world through thirteen true, unsolved mysteries.

The words "Middle Ages" may conjure images of kings and queens, knights and castles, but the period was also full of mysteries that remain unsolved today. In these stories told by historian E.B. Wheeler, you'll journey back to Medieval times. She explores the question of who the real King Arthur was and describes the Asian warlord who conquered much of the Medieval world and vanished with a great treasure. She reveals clues about lost cities in Africa and the Americas and, along the way, introduces samurai, Vikings, and even a pair of green children.

This book was written for young adults but also for anyone, young or old, who loves Medieval history or unsolved mysteries. It's a perfect springboard for in-depth research or simply more reading on whichever mystery piques your curiosity the most.

About the author:

E.B. Wheeler attended BYU, majoring in history with an English minor, and earned graduate degrees in history and landscape architecture from Utah State University.

She's the author of over a dozen books, including *The Bone Map*, *Utah Women: Pioneers, Poets & Politicians*, and Whitney Award winner *Cruel Magic*, as well as several short stories, magazine articles, and scripts for educational programs. The League of Utah Writers named her the Writer of the Year in 2016. In addition to writing, she consults about historic preservation and teaches history. She's always been fascinated by King Arthur and the Middle Ages and hopes to someday find Camelot.

Note from the author:

The stories in this book are true, based on the most reliable historical and modern sources I could find. Writing about the Middle Ages is tricky because fewer people then knew how to read and write—and many of them were too busy farming or fighting to keep records anyway. The people who did write down news and history weren't always eyewitnesses—they only wrote what other people told them, so they might not be accurate. And then those records had to survive hundreds of years of floods, fires, plagues, raids, wars, and page-munching pests to reach us. It's amazing we know anything about what happened in the past! We try to fill in the gaps with modern sciences like

archeology, but the further you travel into the past, the more mysterious it becomes because there are so many things we don't know. Where possible, I used first-hand accounts to reconstruct these stories, but I often had to guess exactly what people said, did, and thought based on the information available.

"Middle Ages" and "Medieval" (which is Latin for "Middle Age" and has nothing to do with "evil" as people sometimes think) are terms from European history, referring to the time between the Classical world of Rome and the Renaissance, when discoveries in science, art, exploration, and printing began the modern world that we live in. People sometimes call them the European Dark Ages, and some things about the times were dark—for hundreds of years, Europeans went without important things like indoor plumbing and representation in government. But it was also a time of creativity and growth, and Medieval people had some skills that modern people are still trying to understand.

Chapter 1: King Arthur

Excerpt from the book:

"In 400 AD, Rome ruled one of the largest empires the world had yet seen. The Roman Empire stretched across parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It united millions of people from Egypt to England with a common language, religion, and government. Rome was called the Eternal City. It had reigned supreme for nearly 800 years..."

But it seems the Empire became too large to administer efficiently.

"The struggling empire, trying to stay alive, divided itself into smaller districts with co-emperors. This left parts of the empire defenseless. In 410, the barbarian Visigoths (and other factions) took advantage of this weakness and invaded and plundered Rome."

"Enter King Arthur of Wales."

Wales

Wales is a country that is part of the United Kingdom, located on the island of Great Britain. It has its own distinct culture and language (Welsh), with Cardiff as its capital city. The red dragon is the national symbol of Wales. It may also be an emblem for Arthur, who was sometimes called by the name Pendragon or "head dragon."

Excerpt:

"The problem with Arthur's history is that Gildas doesn't mention

him. No one who lived at that time did. The first records of Arthur came hundreds of years later. The monks who wrote his history mixed it with legends about dragons, a single warrior slaying a thousand men at once, and a dog so big he left paw prints in stone. These writers believed many fantastical things were possible, which makes it hard to trust their records."

Gildas

Gildas, also known as Gildas Badonicus and Gildas the Wise, was a 6th-century British monk best known for his religious polemic *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, which recounts the history of the Britons before and during the coming of the Saxons. He is one of the best-documented figures of the Christian church in the British Isles during the sub-Roman period, and was renowned for his Biblical knowledge and literary style. In his later life, he emigrated to Brittany and founded a monastery known as Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuys.

Excerpt:

"Arthur might even be a nickname instead of a real name. It could come from the Roman name Artorius. Other historians think it comes from the old British word for bear, "arth," and was used to describe a leader who fought like a bear. Some even suggest that Arthur was an ancient Celtic bear god whose stories were mingled (or mangled) with history."

nickname

A "nickname" is an informal name used to shorten or replace a formal one. It differs from a pseudonym, which is usually used to conceal one's identity, and may also be used to express affection, playfulness, contempt, or to reflect a particular character trait.

Nicknames were important in the Middle Ages in England, where surnames were uncommon. Physical characteristics played a significant role in nicknaming, as people were identified by means of descriptive terms such as barefoot, brown, and russell (red-haired), many of which have become common surnames.

In Viking societies, people often had nicknames which were used in addition to, or instead of, the first name. In some circumstances, the giving of a nickname had a special status in Viking society in that it created a relationship between the name maker and the recipient of the nickname, to the extent that the creation of a nickname also often entailed a formal ceremony and an

exchange of gifts known as "fastening a name."

It might look like nickname is a compound noun formed by adding nick and name together, but the actual history of this word is a bit more complicated. It was formed by metanalysis, or changing how words are spelled based upon how they sound together. Because in speech it is often difficult to tell where word boundaries fall, a *napron*, for example, was incorrectly understood to be "an apron."

In the case of nickname, the Middle English word *eke*, meaning "also" or "in addition," was joined with "name" to form *nekename*—literally, "also-name." Over time, the phrase "*a nekename*" became written as "*an ekename*," but eventually morphed back to the original, now as "nickname."

Other examples of this from Middle English manuscripts include *a neilond* (an island), a nox (an ox), a noke (an oak), a nappyle (an apple), a negge (an egg), and a nynche (an inch). Going in the other direction, "an idiot" sometimes became *a nidiot*, which, with still-common casual pronunciation, became *nidget* in the 1570s.

Excerpt from the book:

"Arthur could have been a nickname for Ambrosius Aurelianus. Gildas doesn't make it clear if Ambrosius was the leader at the Battle of Mount Badon. If so, that would suggest that Ambrosius and Arthur are the same person. If this is true, however, Ambrosius lived and fought for a very long time. It was about fifty years between when the Saxons invaded and the Battle of Mount Badon. That's not impossible, but warriors in the early Middle Ages didn't often lead long lives."

Ambrosius Aurelianus

According to Gildas, Ambrosius Aurelianus was a war leader of the Romano-British who won an important battle against the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th century. He also appeared independently in the legends of the Britons, beginning with the 9th-century *Historia Brittonum*. Eventually, he was transformed by Geoffrey of Monmouth into the uncle of King Arthur, the brother of Arthur's father Uther Pendragon, as a ruler who precedes and predeceases them both. He also appears as a young prophet who meets the tyrant Vortigern; in this guise, he was later transformed into the wizard Merlin.

Battle of Mount Badon

The Battle of Mount Badon (or Baden), fought in the late 5th or early 6th century, was a significant conflict between the Britons and Anglo-Saxons, resulting in a major victory for the Britons that halted Anglo-Saxon expansion for a time.

The earliest known references to the battle, by the British cleric Gildas, date to the 6th century. It is chiefly known today for the supposed involvement of the man who would later be remembered as the legendary King Arthur, although it is not agreed that Arthur was a historical person. Because of the limited number of sources, there is no certainty about the date, location, or details of the fighting.

Almost all scholars agree that this battle did take place. However, Gildas, who wrote within living memory of the battle, does not mention the names of the British or the Saxon leaders who took part. Nor does Gildas describe it as an actual open battle, but rather as a siege.

In academic discussion almost every detail concerning the battle is contested — as it should be. The nature — or science — of historical study requires everything to be challenged.

Excerpts:

"Ambrosius does make appearances in legends about King Arthur.

In some stories, he is Arthur's uncle. In others, under the Welsh version of his name, Emrys, he is a wise man or magician who advises Arthur. This makes him similar to Merlin (who, you might be surprised to discover, was a real person, a poet or bard, in the 500s called by the Welsh name Myrddin, though he was never known to perform magic, unfortunately). So, perhaps the real Arthur wasn't Ambrosius, but his protegee, a literal or adopted heir to his leadership."

"If anyone else wrote about Ambrosius and Arthur close to their lifetimes, we've lost those records to time. We're only left with Gildas's short history."



Chapter 2: Secret Fire

Excerpt from the book:

"Constantinople was the last jewel in the crown of the Roman Empire. It was the largest and wealthiest city in Europe after Rome's decay. ... In 678, however, it looked like Constantinople would fall to a different foe. Muslim forces swept north from

Arabia. They conquered Egypt and Syria and chipped away at Constantinople's powers by land and sea. Finally, they surrounded the great city.

The greatest power of the Arab military in 678 was its navy. ... Now, the great Arab admiral Yazid ibn Shagara directed his ships in their siege outside the towering walls of Constantinople. Once the great city fell, the Arab armies could continue north, claiming more of the lands that had once been Rome's."

"Refugees packed the streets of Constantinople. They had fled their own ruined cities for the one hope left of safety. One of these refugees, a Christian or Jewish architect named Kallinikos who had fled the Arabs in Syria, approached the emperor, Constantine IV. He had an idea."

Constantinople

Constantinople is an ancient city in modern-day Turkey that's now known as Istanbul. First settled in the seventh century BCE, Constantinople developed into a thriving port thanks to its prime geographic location between Europe and Asia and its natural harbor. Since it was surrounded almost entirely by water, it could be easily defended. In 330 CE, it became the site of Roman Emperor Constantine's "New Rome," a Christian city of immense wealth and magnificent architecture. Constantinople stood as the seat of the Byzantine Empire for the next 1,100 years, enduring periods of great fortune and horrific sieges, until being overrun by Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire in 1453.

Kallinikos (Callinicus)

Callinicus of Heliopolis was an architect who is credited with the invention of Greek fire, a highly incendiary liquid that was projected from "siphons" to enemy ships or troops and was almost impossible to extinguish.

Born in Syria, Callinicus was a Jewish refugee who was forced to flee the Arabs to Constantinople. The ingredients of Greek fire were kept a state secret, known only by the Byzantine emperor and Callinicus' family, which manufactured it. The precise composition is still unknown, but it is generally accepted that it was a mixture of naphtha, pitch, sulfur, possibly saltpeter, and some unknown ingredients. First used in the Battle of Cyzicus (c. 673 CE) by the Byzantines against a Saracen fleet off Constantinople, Greek fire proved to be instrumental in that Byzantine victory.

Constantine IV

Constantine IV (c. 650 – 10 July 685) was Byzantine emperor from 668 to

685. His reign saw the first serious check to nearly 50 years of uninterrupted Arab expansion, most notably his successful defense of Constantinople, and the temporary stabilization of the Byzantine Empire after decades of war, defeats, and civil strife.

Excerpt:

"The Byzantine ships had changed a little since the Arab navy had last faced them. They now had long nozzles on the front of each ship. The sailors on the Byzantine ships worked a pump that sprayed liquid from the nozzles on their ships. The liquid hit the Arab ships. Then it burst into flame. The Arab sailors threw water on the fires to put them out. The water made the flames roar up like angry lions, consuming the sails and the decks of the wooden ships. Some of the burning liquid got onto the sailors. It stuck to them, searing their skin. They jumped into the water, but that didn't stop the fire. Instead, the flames burned on the water, turning the sea into a chaos of fire and screaming as Arab ships burned and sank."

Greek fire

Greek fire was an incendiary weapon used by the Byzantine Empire from the 7th to the 14th centuries, known for its ability to burn on water and its devastating effects in naval warfare. The recipe for Greek fire was a closely-guarded state secret; historians have variously speculated that it was based on saltpeter, sulfur, or quicklime, but most modern scholars agree that it was based on petroleum mixed with resins, comparable in composition to modern napalm.

The employment of incendiary materials in war is of ancient origin; many writers of antiquity refer to flaming arrows, firepots, and such substances as pitch, naphtha, sulfur, and charcoal. In later centuries saltpeter and turpentine made their appearance, and the resulting flammable mixtures were known to the Crusaders as Greek fire or wild fire. True Greek fire was evidently a petroleum-based mixture, however.

In recent popular culture, Greek fire was used by Blackbeard's ship, the Queen Anne's Revenge, in the 2011 film *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*. An application of Greek fire is shown in the 2011 *Ubisoft* video game *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* when the main character, Ezio Auditore, escapes from the port of Istanbul using a hand projector located on an Ottoman ship.

Excerpt:

"Maybe the best description of Greek Fire is by Byzantine Princess

Anna Komnene. She described the preparations, 'on the prow of each ship [Emperor Alexios] had a head fixed of a lion or other land-animal, made in brass or iron with the mouth open and then gilded over, so that their mere aspect was terrifying. And the fire which was to be directed against the enemy through tubes he made to pass through the mouths of the beasts, so that it seemed as if the lions and the other similar monsters were vomiting the fire.'"

Anna Komnene

Anna Komnene (Anna Comnena in Latin) was a Byzantine Greek princess and historian. She is the author of the *Alexiad*, an account of the reign of her father, Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos. Although not an impartial history, Anna's position at court, her thorough research of sources and a good measure of pithy observation and insightful opinion have all ensured the *Alexiad* remains one of the most important and colorful primary sources of Byzantine history.

Her work constitutes the most important primary source of Byzantine history of the late 11th and early 12th centuries, as well as of the early Crusades. She was well-educated in Greek literature and history, philosophy, theology, mathematics, and medicine.

Excerpt:

"Another ingredient that may have been part of Greek Fire was quicklime. Quicklime is calcium oxide: fine, white crystals formed when limestone is heated. It has long been used in making mortar to hold stones together, such as in the pyramids of Egypt, Roman aqueducts, and the Great Wall of China. When it's not mixed with other materials, though, quicklime has a property that made it effective and horrifying in warfare: when it gets wet, it becomes burning hot.

Jugs of quicklime thrown like grenades into the lines of enemy soldiers would float in the air in a cloud of fine, white powder. When it drifted into the eyes, noses, mouths, and lungs of soldiers, it burned and blinded them."

quicklime

Quicklime, also known as calcium oxide (CaO), is a white, caustic, alkaline solid produced by heating calcium carbonate, such as limestone, to drive off carbon dioxide. At room temperature, CaO will spontaneously absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, reversing the reaction. It will also absorb water, converting itself into calcium hydroxide and releasing heat. The bubbling that

accompanies the reaction is the source of its name as "quick," or living, lime. The reaction of quicklime with water is sometimes used in portable heat sources.

One of the oldest known products of a chemical reaction, quicklime is used extensively as a building material. The origin of hydraulic cements goes back to ancient Greece and Rome. The materials used were lime and a volcanic ash that slowly reacted with it in the presence of water to form a hard mass. This served as the cementing material of the Roman mortars and concretes of more than 2,000 years ago and of subsequent construction work in western Europe.

Calcium oxide is used with calcium hydroxide in treating water to make it safe for drinking; adding these chemicals increases the water's alkalinity, which kills microorganisms. Limelights, used in the 19th century in stage lighting, emit a very brilliant white (hence the expression "to be in the limelight").

"Quick" comes from Middle English *quik*, from Old English *cwic*, meaning "living, alive, animate, characterized by the presence of life," and figuratively, of mental qualities, "rapid or ready."



Chapter 3: The Silent Sentinals of the Rapa Nui

Excerpt from the book:

"On the most remote inhabited island in the world, the huge heads of giant stone statues stand with their backs to the sea. They look inward over the island, their eyes cold and empty. Elsewhere, scattered across the island, half-finished statues lie neglected in quarries. Others were dragged out of the quarry and then abandoned. We know who built the statues, but we don't know how or why — or why they stopped. Their descendants, the Rapa Nui, still live on the island, but none of them now can read the ancient writing that might tell the secrets of the statues."

statue

A statue is a free-standing sculpture in which the realistic, full-length figures of persons or animals are carved or cast in a durable material such as wood, metal or stone. Typical statues are life-sized or close to life-size. A sculpture small enough to lift and carry is a statuette or figurine, while those that are more than twice life-size are regarded as colossal statues.

Statues have been produced in many cultures from prehistory to the present; the oldest-known statue dates to about 30,000 years ago.

Among the verbs for "represent as a statue" that have been tried in English and mostly discarded are statuize (1719), statue (1751), and statufy (1868).

Rapa Nui

Rapa Nui, or Easter Island, is one of the most remote inhabited places in the world, located around 3,600 miles off the coast of Chile, which annexed the territory in 1888. The island is named for the Polynesian people who lived there from around 1280. While the Rapa Nui are best known for their *moai*, nearly 1,000 extant monolithic stone statues of deified human ancestors, a lesser known marvel of theirs is Rongorongo (which means chanting), a unique writing system that new research asserts was independently created. In 1995, UNESCO named Easter Island a World Heritage Site.

The inhabitants created a thriving and industrious culture, as evidenced by the island's enormous stone *moai* and other artifacts. Land clearing for cultivation and the introduction of the Polynesian rat, however, led to gradual deforestation.

Groundbreaking new research from Uppsala University, published in *Antiquity*, reveals that Rapa Nui was not merely a recipient of Polynesian culture but an active innovator whose ceremonial ideas spread back across the Pacific, influencing the development of sacred sites throughout East Polynesia.

Excerpts:

"During the Middle Ages, most peoples saw the oceans as a daunting barrier to travel or exploration — the unknown too terrifying and deadly to risk. The Vikings were one exception, but even they stayed fairly close to land. The Polynesian people of the Pacific Ocean, however, saw the waters as a great highway."

"Despite the great distance between the Rapa Nui and other people, they may not have been totally isolated. As a Polynesian people, the Rapa Nui came from the direction of Asia. They brought chickens with them to the island, and also bananas, both of which come from Southeast Asia. They did not have pigs or dogs like many other Polynesian people. Instead, their most important food was the sweet potato — a food from South America."

sweet potato

The sweet potato is a vine (*Ipomoea batatas*) of the morning glory family

(*Convolvulaceae*), native to tropical America. Its sizeable, starchy, sweet-tasting tuberous roots are a staple food in parts of the world. The fleshy roots are served as a cooked vegetable, in whole or mashed form, and are used as pie filling. In Japan the crop has long been grown for drying and for manufacture of starch and alcohol. The name "sweet potato" is also used for a musical instrument called the ocarina.

Cultivars of the sweet potato have been bred to bear tubers with flesh and skin of various colors. Moreover, the young shoots and leaves are occasionally eaten as greens. The sweet potato and the potato are in the order *Solanales*, making them distant relatives.

Sweet potatoes may also be called yams in North America. When soft varieties were first grown commercially there, growers saw a need to differentiate between the two. Enslaved Africans had already been calling the 'soft' sweet potatoes 'yams' because they resembled the unrelated yams in Africa. Thus, 'soft' sweet potatoes were referred to as 'yams' to distinguish them from the 'firm' varieties.



Chapter 4: The Green Children in the Wolf Pit

Excerpt:

"It sounds too strange to be true: sometime in the 1100s, a young boy and girl in odd clothes were discovered in a wolf pit in England. Strangest of all, the two siblings had green skin. They spoke a language no one understood. They refused to eat bread, meat, vegetables, or anything else until they spotted some broad beans and scarfed them down raw. As they tried other foods, their skin lost its green color. The children slowly learned English and told the villagers they came from another land where it was always twilight. The villagers had both children baptized, and the boy died. The girl lived out her life with the villagers, though she had a reputation for being stubborn and wild."

wolf pit

Trapping pits are deep pits dug into the ground, or built from stone, in order to trap animals. European rock drawings and cave paintings reveal that bear, moose and wolf were hunted since the Stone Age using trapping pits. These pits, which can measure as much as 13 feet by 23 feet in size and be up to several yards deep, were camouflaged with branches and leaves. They had steep sides lined with planks or masonry, making it impossible for the animal to escape once it had fallen in. When the animal had fallen into the pit, it was killed, usually by hunters waiting nearby.

Wolf pits would have been covered by branches and baited with carrion such as a dead cow. The wolf would be attracted by the smell, fall in the pit and be unable to scale the steep sides; it could then be killed.

In medieval fortification, a *trou de loup*, meaning 'wolf hole,' (also commonly referred to as a tiger pit in the East) was a type of booby trap or defensive obstacle used to trap men. At the bottom of the pit, a sharpened wooden stake would be hammered in. In some cases, the pit was concealed by light cover of wicker and soil. *Trous de loup* might be found singly as a trap (in which case they were always concealed), or in a dense pattern with no gaps between pits, used as an obstacle in front of a defended position.

Even though the term has a medieval origin, this kind of device was first described by Julius Caesar, who employed the device during the siege of Alesia. Later Roman examples can be seen at Rough Castle on the Antonine Wall in Great Britain.

Woolpit

Woolpit is a village in the English county of Suffolk. It is notable for the 12th-century legend of the green children of Woolpit and for its parish church, which has especially fine medieval woodwork. The village's name, first recorded in the 10th century as Wlpit and later as Wlfpeta, derives from the Old English wulf-pytt, meaning "pit for trapping wolves."

The only near-contemporary accounts of the green children are contained in William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum* and Ralph of Coggeshall's *Chronicum Anglicanum*, written in about 1189 and 1220, respectively.

Two approaches have dominated explanations of the story of the green children: that it is a folktale describing an imaginary encounter with the inhabitants of another world, perhaps subterranean or extraterrestrial, or it presents a real event in a garbled manner. The story was praised as an ideal fantasy by the English anarchist poet and critic Herbert Read in his *English Prose Style*, first published in 1928, and provided the inspiration for his only novel, *The Green Child*, published in 1935.

Local author and folk singer Bob Roberts stated in his 1978 book *A Slice of Suffolk* that, "I was told there are still people in Woolpit who are 'descended from the green children', but nobody would tell me who they were!"

Excerpt:

"People with a very poor diet or certain infections can develop

chlorosis or 'green sickness.' It's a form of anemia (lack of iron) that can cause sufferers to become pale and have a greenish tint to their skin. It's very rare today, with most people eating a healthier diet and having better access to medicines than in the past.

Interestingly, old accounts of green sickness said it also caused a lack of interest in food. That fits with the children, whose green color went away as they eventually ate the food the villagers offered them."

chlorosis

Chlorosis, also known as "green sickness," is a type of hypochromic anemia characterized by pale skin and symptoms like fatigue, shortness of breath, and irregular menstruation, often linked to iron deficiency.

In the Middle Ages, the victims of this wasting disease tended to be young virgins presenting with listlessness, loss of appetite, constipation, and dizziness. Its appearance in young, unmarried women, only just into their menarche, made it easy for male doctors to attribute the condition to female deprivation from their natural destinies — i.e., marriage and childbirth. In the popular imagination, the green-sickness was often conflated with unrequited love.

Excerpt:

"The broad beans mentioned in the story suggest another possible solution to the mystery. Some people have genetic "favism," an intolerance of fava and broad beans. The reaction is worse when the beans are raw. Their body's inability to digest these beans can cause confusion and jaundice. Jaundice normally gives skin a yellow tone, but in severe cases, it can also look green. And favism is more common and more severe in males. That could explain why the boy died and the girl survived. The main question unanswered by this theory is why the children would only eat broad beans--the food that was killing them."

favism

"Favism" is a hereditary condition, primarily affecting males of Mediterranean descent, characterized by hemolytic anemia triggered by eating fava beans or exposure to their pollen. It can lead to symptoms like yellowish skin, dark urine, shortness of breath, and feeling tired. Complications can include anemia and newborn jaundice.

Affected persons must avoid dietary triggers, notably fava beans. This can be

difficult, as fava beans may be called "broad beans" and are used in many foods, whole or as flour. Falafel is probably the best known such food, but fava beans are often used as filler in meatballs and other foods.

Excerpt:

"The story of the Green Children of Woolpit continued to capture the English imagination long after the 1100s. In the 1600s, an Oxford scholar guessed that the children fell from "the heavens." An English bishop suggested that the children were extraterrestrial aliens in his book, *The Man in the Moone*. It was one of the first science fiction stories ever written."

The continued presence of the Green Children in creative works is a testament to the story's enduring power. They have been featured in various novels, television shows and documentaries, as well as an opera. There is even an Anglo-Norwegian band called *The Green Children*, formed in 2002, their music often exploring themes of nature, mythology, and the otherworldly.

The most likely explanation for the green children of Woolpit, however, is that they were the descendants of Flemish immigrants who had been persecuted and possibly killed by King Stephen or perhaps King Henry II. Lost, confused and without their parents, the children could have ended up at Woolpit speaking only their native tongue of Flemish, perhaps explaining why the villagers thought that they were speaking gibberish.

But who knows?



Chapter 5: Lost Treasure of the Steppes

Excerpts from the book:

"Somewhere in central Asia, perhaps in Mongolia or China, a lost tomb contains the remains of one man. His grave bears no markings. The cold winds sweep over it, whistling through the steppe grasses. The man in this forgotten tomb was once the most powerful person on earth. He is the ancestor of millions of people alive today. His memory was so strong that for a time, his people's enemies forbade anyone from speaking his name."

"The lost tomb—and its treasure—belong to a Mongolian man born in about 1162 named Temujin. His name means "made of iron" or "iron worker." When Temujin was born, there were many powerful empires surrounding the Mongols."

steppe

A steppe is a vast area of dry, grassy plain, typically found in regions with a temperate climate, characterized by few trees and a significant range of temperature. These grasslands are located in eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, as well as in North and South America.

The Eurasian Steppe, also called the Great Steppe or The Steppes, is found in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and neighboring countries stretching from Ukraine in the west through Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the Altai, Koppet Dag and Tian Shan ranges in China.

Since the Paleolithic age, the Steppe Route has been the main overland route between Eastern Europe, North Asia, Central Asia and East Asia economically, politically, and culturally. The Steppe route is a predecessor not only of the Silk Road, which developed during antiquity and the Middle Ages, but also of the Eurasian Land Bridge in the modern era. It has been home to nomadic empires and many large tribal confederations and ancient states throughout history. The Eurasian Steppe had a significant role in the spread of the horse, the wheel and Indo-European languages.

Temüjin/Genghis Khan

Genghis Khan, born Temüjin (c. 1162 - 1227), was the founder and first khan of the Mongol Empire, which became the largest contiguous empire in history. Temüjin formally adopted the title "Genghis Khan," meaning Fierce Ruler or Great Ruler, at an assembly in 1206.

Carrying out reforms designed to ensure long-term stability, he transformed the Mongols' tribal structure into an integrated meritocracy dedicated to the service of the ruling family. He forbade Mongols from kidnapping women or taking other Mongols as slaves, and eliminated some of the harsher punishments for enemies and criminals. He introduced a system of writing and recorded the laws. He also enforced religious tolerance.

Genghis Khan valued loyalty above all and mutual fidelity became a cornerstone of his new nation. He did not find it difficult to gain the allegiance of others: he was superbly charismatic even as a youth, as shown by the number of people who left existing social roles behind to join him. Although his trust was hard to earn, if he felt loyalty was assured, he granted his total confidence in return. Recognized for his generosity towards his followers, Genghis unhesitatingly rewarded previous assistance.

Genghis came to believe the supreme deity Tengri had ordained a great

destiny for him. Initially, his ambition was limited only to Mongolia, but as success followed success and the reach of the Mongol nation expanded, he and his followers came to believe that he was embodied with "divine grace." Thus, anyone who did not recognize his right to world power was treated as an enemy. This viewpoint allowed Genghis to rationalize any hypocritical or duplicitous moments on his own part.

Genghis Khan remains a controversial figure. He was generous and intensely loyal to his followers, but ruthless towards his enemies. The Mongol army under Genghis killed millions of people, yet his conquests also facilitated unprecedented commercial and cultural exchange over a vast geographical area. He is remembered as a backwards, savage tyrant in Russia and the Arab world, while recent Western scholarship has begun to reassess its previous view of him as a barbarian warlord. He was posthumously deified in Mongolia; modern Mongolians recognize him as the founding father of their nation.

Mongols

Mongols are members of a Central Asian ethnographic group of closely related tribal peoples who live mainly on the Mongolian Plateau and share a common language and nomadic tradition. Their homeland is now divided into the independent country of Mongolia (Outer Mongolia) and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. Owing to wars and migrations, Mongols are found throughout Central Asia.

With a few exceptions, the Mongol social structure, economy, culture, and language showed very little change over many centuries. They were basically nomadic pastoralists who were superb horsemen and traveled with their flocks of sheep, goats, cattle, and horses over the immense grasslands of the steppes of Central Asia. Traditional Mongol society was based on the family, the clan, and the tribe, with clan names derived from those of common male ancestors.

The Mongol Empire's military strategies were highly effective in enabling rapid expansion. They utilized horse archery and mobile cavalry units to outmaneuver larger enemy forces, often employing psychological tactics to instill fear and encourage surrender. Their ability to adapt to various terrains and employ superior communication networks allowed them to coordinate large-scale campaigns efficiently, leading to significant territorial gains.

Pax Mongolica created a safe environment for trade across the vast territories controlled by the Mongols, allowing merchants from diverse cultures to travel freely. This led to a significant increase in trade along the Silk Road, where goods like silk, spices, and technology flowed between Asia and Europe. Cultural exchanges flourished as well, with ideas, religions, and technologies

spreading across regions, fundamentally altering societies in both continents.

Excerpts:

"Genghis Khan was a rich and powerful man by the 1220s. The Mongols collected loot like gold, silver, and silk from all of their conquered enemies. They also spared the lives of craftsmen like smiths and glassmakers in enemy cities. This made Genghis Khan and his people extremely wealthy. Ironically, the result of their warfare was an era of peace and wealth across a vast stretch of Europe and Asia.

The greatest mystery about Genghis Khan surrounds his death. We don't know when or where he died, where he was buried, or what treasures were buried with him. This was intentional."

"Earlier rulers from the steppes were buried deep underground in chambers made with logs. Those chambers were filled with treasure from across Europe and Asia. These kings had nowhere near the wealth or power of Genghis Khan. His tomb is very likely a trove of wealth and information about the past. But so far, the steppes he once ruled have respected his final wish and kept his burial hidden from the world."



Chapter 6: The Forgotten City of the Mississippi

Excerpts:

"Imagine a huge city — one of the largest in the world during the Middle Ages. Its broad streets line up perfectly with the paths of the sun and the moon."

"High walls of huge wooden logs protect the inhabitants, who live in wooden houses with connecting courtyards. Outsiders walk hundreds of miles to trade and worship in the city. The streets echo with the voices of people bartering over deer, fish, and jewelry. Women chat as they weave cloth, and metal smiths hammer out copper jewelry. The scent of roasting corn and cooking fires fills the air. At the center of this great city rises a huge pyramid covering 14 acres — bigger than 10 American football fields and about ten stories tall."

"This city might sound like something built by the Egyptians or the Aztecs in Mexico, but it's found in what is now Illinois in the United States, along the Mississippi River. Today, it's called Cahokia after the Native people who lived near it when the Europeans arrived. We

don't know what its inhabitants called it. They didn't leave behind any writing, and their descendants told no stories about the city. ... Almost everything about Cahokia is a mystery."

Cahokia

Cahokia is an archaeological site in southwestern Illinois, known for being the largest pre-Columbian city in North America, flourishing from around 1050 to 1350 CE. It features earthen mounds, including Monks Mound, the largest man-made structure in the Americas north of Mexico, and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Cahokia Mounds is the site of a Native American city directly across the Mississippi River from present-day St. Louis. The archeological park covers 2,200 acres, and contains about 80 manmade mounds, but the ancient city was much larger. At its apex around 1100 CE, the city covered about 6 square miles, included about 120 earthworks in a wide range of sizes, shapes, and functions, and had a population of between 15,000 and 20,000 people. Cahokia was the largest and most influential urban settlement of the Mississippian culture, which developed advanced societies across much of what is now the Central and the Southeastern United States, beginning around 1000 CE.

The city's original name is unknown. The mounds were later named after the Cahokia tribe, a historic Illiniwek people living in the area when the first French explorers arrived in the 17th century. As this was centuries after Cahokia was abandoned by its original inhabitants, the Cahokia tribe was not necessarily descended from the earlier Mississippian-era people.

The enormous central plaza covered nearly 40 acres and featured numerous immense earthworks. This included the pyramidal Monks Mound, a structure that rose to 100 feet, covered more than 14 acres, and contained more than 25 million cubic feet of earth. An incredible structure to behold, Monks Mound is believed to have held a strong significance. Anthropologists believe that it housed a building some 100 feet long, nearly 50 feet wide, and 50 feet tall. This would have been the seat of governance for Cahokia.

Cahokia was settled around 600 CE during the Late Woodland period. Mound building at this location began with the emergent Mississippian cultural period, around the 9th century CE. The inhabitants left no written records beyond symbols on pottery, marine shell, copper, wood, and stone, but the evidence of elaborately planned community, woodhenge, mounds, and burials later in time reveal a complex and sophisticated society.

Cahokia became the most important center for the Mississippian culture,

found in settlements that ranged along major waterways across what is now the Midwest, Eastern, and Southeastern US. It maintained trade links with communities as far away as the Great Lakes to the north and the Gulf Coast to the south, trading in such exotic items as copper, Mill Creek chert, shark teeth, and lightning whelk shells.

In the years around 1050 CE, Cahokia experienced an expansion. An ordered city grid was imposed on earlier Woodland settlements. This was accompanied by a homogenization of material culture (e.g. pottery and architectural styles) that had divided the smaller settlements beforehand. Mound construction increased. Some mounds were built on earlier settlement locations—arguably by descendants emphasizing their particular ancestral positions in the new social order. All villages experienced either renewal and construction efforts turning them into mound centers, or were depopulated to become just a few households or a single farmstead. New settlement types including nucleated settlements, mound centers, small dispersed clusters of houses, and single-family farmsteads appeared throughout the region.

The city's complex construction of earthen mounds required digging, excavation and transportation by hand using woven baskets. Construction used 55 million cubic feet of earth, and the work was accomplished over decades. Its highly planned large, smoothed-flat, ceremonial plazas, sited around the mounds, with homes for thousands connected by laid out pathways and courtyards, suggest the location served as a central religious pilgrimage city.

In the middle of the succeeding 13th century, Cahokia's population had decreased by half, if not more, and by 1350 CE the city was abandoned. Scholars, so far, have been unable to determine exactly what caused the abandonment.

The fall and decline of Cahokia remains a mystery.

Excerpt:

"Cahokia arose from the Mississippian Culture. ... It was known for building mounds of earth. Sometimes these mounds were used as platforms for building houses and sometimes for decorative or religious purposes. The people played sports, including an early version of lacrosse, which was invented by Native Americans."

Mississippian culture

The Mississippian culture, the last major prehistoric cultural development in North America, was a Native American society that thrived in the

southeastern and midwestern US from around 800 to 1600 CE. It was based on intensive cultivation of corn (maize), beans, squash, and other crops, which resulted in large populations in towns along riverine bottomlands. It is also known for its large earthen mounds and complex social structures, directed by priest-rulers. It was composed of a series of urban settlements and satellite villages linked together by loose trading networks. The largest city was Cahokia, believed to be a major religious center.

platform mound

A "platform mound" is any earthwork or mound intended to support a structure or activity. It typically refers to a flat-topped mound, whose sides may be pyramidal.

The indigenous peoples of North America built mounds for well over a thousand years, starting in the Archaic period and continuing through the Woodland period. Many cultures of the Eastern Woodlands are known for using platform mounds as a central aspect of their overarching religious practices and beliefs.

These platform mounds are usually four-sided truncated pyramids, steeply sided, with steps built of wooden logs ascending one side of the earthworks. Documented uses for Mississippian mounds include platforms for semi-public chief's houses, public temples, mortuaries, charnel houses, earth lodge/town houses, residences, square grounds and rotundas, and dance floors.

Many of the mounds were the result of multiple episodes of mound construction, with the mound becoming larger with each event. The site of a mound usually had special significance. This site was covered with a layer of basket-transported soil and clay, and a new structure constructed on its summit. These layers also incorporated layers of different kinds of clay, soil and sod, an elaborate engineering technique to forestall slumping of the mounds and to ensure their steep sides did not collapse. The large amounts of fill needed for the mounds left large holes in the landscape now known by archaeologists as "borrow pits." These pits were sometimes left to fill with water and stocked with fish.

Some mounds were developed with separate levels (or terraces) and aprons, such as Emerald Mound, which is one large terrace with two smaller mounds on its summit; or Monks Mound, which has four separate levels and stands close to 100 feet in height. Monks Mound had at least ten separate periods of mound construction over 200 years.

Although the mounds were primarily meant as substructure mounds for buildings or activities, sometimes burials did occur there. Mound C at Etowah

has been found to have more than 100 burials into the final layer of the mound, with many grave goods added, such as Mississippian copper plates, monolithic stone axes, ceremonial pottery and carved whelk shell gorgets. Also interred in this mound was a paired set of white marble Mississippian stone statues.

Woodland period

In the classification of archaeological cultures of North America, the Woodland period of pre-Columbian cultures spanned a period from roughly 1000 BCE to European contact. The term "Woodland Period" was introduced in the 1930s as a generic term for prehistoric sites falling between the Archaic hunter-gatherers and the agriculturalist Mississippian cultures.

Excerpts:

"The people of the city enjoyed peace and prosperity— except for those who became human sacrifices, that is. Even though there are no signs of attacks on the city, it appears that Cahokia's leaders often reinforced their defenses, making the walls stronger. They weren't fighting anyone, but they were afraid of something."

"Mound 72 holds what's called the "Beaded Burial." This is a collection of several bodies that were covered with beads made of seashells after they were buried. A disturbing twist on the Beaded Burial is that the other bodies found in Mound 72 are in mass graves. They appear to be human sacrifices. Most of them are teenage girls and young women, probably strangled to death. One of the last mass graves in Mound 72 is different. The people buried in it died violently. Their bones show marks from axes or clubs. Most of them are male, and they seem to be related to each other."

"Cahokia's fall is just as mysterious as its rise. But there are no stories of Cahokia. The city was not only forgotten but also erased from the memory of the neighboring peoples. It's as if they refused to even speak of the place. As if it was forbidden. When European explorers came up the Mississippi in the 1600s, none of the Native people could or would tell them anything about the city."

"Were the things that happened there so terrible that no one ever wanted to speak of them again?"



Excerpt:

"Witch hunts were one of the darkest episodes of Medieval European history. It was a time when thousands of people who were different—who acted strangely, worshipped in their own way, or just didn't fit in with the right people—were hung or burned as witches. Many of these accused witches were women, though men were sometimes executed as well. But one of the earliest accused witches, an Irish woman named Alice Kyteler, may have actually been up to no good."

Dame Alice Kyteler

Dame Alice Kyteler (1263 – after 1324) was the first recorded person condemned for witchcraft in Ireland.

Her first husband, c.1280-85, was William Outlawe, a wealthy merchant and moneylender from Kilkenny. They had a son, also called William, (mayor of Kilkenny in 1305) who was to feature strongly in the saga of her life. Her husband became ill and died suddenly after a few years of marriage.

Shortly after the death of William Outlawe, Alice married her second wealthy husband, Adam de Blund of Cullen, who had children from a previous marriage. He soon also died suddenly and mysteriously.

Alice's third husband (by 1309) was Richard de Valle, a wealthy landholder of County Tipperary. After de Valle's death c.1316, Kyteler took proceedings against one of her stepsons, Richard, for the recovery of her widow's dower. This act incited the suspicion and anger of her stepchildren, as they would have received the money had she not intervened. In 1324, this stepson brought his complaint to Richard de Ledrede, the Bishop of Ossory, who twisted it into an elaborate Satanic conspiracy, due to his training under Pope John XXII in Avignon, thereby creating a remarkable precursor to much later European witch trials.

Kyteler's fourth husband (c.1316–24) was John le Poer. After his death, members of her fourth husband's family, attempting to break the will that left her in control of most of the family fortune, accused her of malevolent magic.

Bishop Richard de Ledrede sought to uphold the laws of the church and morality and seek out heretics as soon as he arrived in Kilkenny. When the case of Alice Kyteler was presented before him in 1324, he began his larger project of addressing witchcraft.

Kyteler was charged with heresy, sacrifice of animals, having intercourse with demons, practicing witchcraft, and killing her husbands for their money.

She was indicted by Bishop de Ledrede but, with her connections and wealth, she was able to defy the church. The bishop, however, moved to excommunicate her. Kyteler responded by accusing the bishop of slander and getting him imprisoned. He responded by indicting the whole community.

However, the lord justice, who supported Kyteler, obliged the bishop to lift his ban. The bishop eventually succeeded in instituting a case against Kyteler and others accused with her of sorcery, but she escaped. Her maid Petronilla de Meath was arrested and flogged, only after she confessed to various orgies involving Kyteler. Petronilla was excommunicated and burned for her part in Kyteler's supposed crimes at Kilkenny on November 3, 1324.

Kyteler is believed to have fled the country to either England or Flanders, but there is no record of her after her escape from persecution.

The case is significant as the first witchcraft trial in Ireland and it set the precedent for how all following witchcraft and heresy cases would be executed. The act of burning witches in Ireland lasted until 1895.

black widow

The term "black widow" refers to a venomous spider known for the female's distinctive black color and red hourglass marking on its abdomen. The term can also describe a woman who kills her lovers, derived from the female spider's supposed habit of eating the male after mating. Human black widows are popular characters in stories.

wily

If you're wily, you're cunning, mischievously artful, tricky, and full of wiles. You're clever and skilled at using tricks or deceit to achieve your goals. A wile is a stratagem or trick intended to deceive or ensnare.

Just think about the old Warner Brothers Looney Tunes cartoons. Their aptly named cartoon character, Wile E. Coyote, got his name from a clever play on words. Wile E. is supposed to be cunning, crafty, and clever — in other words, wily. Wile E. is all those things, but unfortunately he was usually bested by that pesky roadrunner anyway.

Excerpt:

"Medieval European widows had little incentive to marry again if they were wealthy. While she was a widow, a woman could own property and manage her own business. Once a woman married, her husband took control of everything she had. Legally, she ceased to

exist as a person and became her husband's property."

widow

A "widow" (female) or widower (male) is a person whose spouse has died and who has not remarried. An archaic term for a widow is "relict," literally "someone left over." This word can sometimes be found on older gravestones.

In traditional medieval societies, a widow was seen as one who had been tainted by close contact with death. The uncanny powers liberated by death inspired fear, so widows were moved to the margin of social life. But widowhood was perceived as a transitory period, preceding a new marriage, which finally let the woman leave that temporary status and recover a stable position in society.

The word "widow" is used in other ways:

- a short line of type (especially at the top of a column)
- widow's peak (from the belief that hair growing to a point on the forehead is an omen of early widowhood, suggestive of the "peak" of a widow's hood)
- the widow bird (so-called in reference to the long black tail feathers of the males, suggestive of widows' veils)
- grass widow (originally "mistress," also used to refer to casual bedding, now more usually to mean an absent husband, as in "golf widow")

So, was Alice guilty of poisoning her husbands? She might have done so for the money. Or she might have done it because at that time, divorce was almost impossible.

Did she practice witchcraft?

Many people would like to know the answers, as evidenced by the popularity of the subject in the media. Currently, several books have been written about Alice Kyteler, including one by Robin Morgan called *The Burning Time*. The feminist art piece by Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, features a place setting for Petronella de Meath. The plate features the image of a book, a candle, a bell, and a cauldron. All of these items are encapsulated by fire.



Chapter 8: Palace in the Clouds

"High in the Andes mountains of South America, Incan buildings perch thousands of feet above the river below. The buildings sit on a major fault line, prone to serious earthquakes, but their stone walls are intact after hundreds of years. The buildings have carved stones

for tracing the movement of the sun, a sacred cave, and stairs that lead to nowhere.

The enormous stones would have taken hundreds of people to move—the work of a lifetime—but the buildings were abandoned with no sign of a struggle. Why did the Incas build [Machu Picchu] in such a remote location, and why did they desert [it]?"

The Inca Empire

The Inca Empire was the largest empire in pre-Columbian America, its capital located in the city of Cusco. The Inca civilization rose from the Peruvian highlands sometime in the early 1200s and expanded to Ecuador, Bolivia, northwest Argentina and much of Chile. Its official language was Quechua. The Portuguese arrived in 1524 and the Spanish in 1532. By 1572 the last Inca state was fully conquered.

The anthropologist Gordon McEwan wrote that the Incas were able to construct "one of the greatest imperial states in human history" without the use of the wheel, draft animals, knowledge of iron or steel, or even a system of writing. Notable features of the Inca Empire included its monumental architecture, especially stonework, extensive road network reaching all corners of the empire, finely-woven textiles, use of knotted strings (*quipu* or *kipu*) for record keeping and communication, agricultural innovations in a difficult environment, and efficient organization of its people and their labor.

The Inca Empire functioned largely without money and without markets, using the barter system for the exchange of goods and services. "Taxes" consisted of a labor obligation of a person to the Empire. The Inca rulers (who theoretically owned all the means of production) reciprocated by granting access to land and goods and providing food and drink in celebratory feasts for their subjects.

fault (noun)

"Fault," as a noun, refers to a mistake, flaw, or imperfection, often caused by ignorance, bad judgment or inattention. It can also describe:

- a weakness in character
- a fracture in geological terms
- a failure in showjumping horses
- hounds losing the scent in hunting

Fault can mean "blame" — as a noun or verb. If you say, "It's my fault," you accept the blame. A fault can be a shortcoming — everyone has faults because no one is perfect — or a crack in the earth's crust, like the San Andreas Fault.

A "fault line" refers to a crack in the Earth's surface where two blocks of land have moved past each other, often associated with geological faults. It can also describe a significant division or problem in a social or political context.

Machu Picchu

Machu Picchu (old mountain) is an Inca settlement located in the High Andes of Peru, some 50 miles north of Cusco. The site, perched high above the Urubamba river, has been variously described as a fortress, imperial retreat, and ceremonial precinct. It was founded in c. 1450 CE, had capacity for around 1,000 residents at its peak, and ranked amongst the most sacred of all sites for the Inca. Following the collapse of the Inca empire, Machu Picchu was abandoned and forgotten, only to be rediscovered in 1911 CE by the explorer Hiram Bingham. Designated a National Historic Sanctuary by Peru in 1981 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983, Machu Picchu was also named one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in 2007. As of 2024, the site receives over 1.5 million visitors annually, making it Peru's most visited international tourist destination.

Machu Picchu was constructed in the classical Inca style, featuring finely crafted dry-stone walls. Notable structures include the Temple of the Sun, the Temple of the Three Windows, and the Intihuatana ritual stone.

Excerpts:

"It took tremendous work to cut stones, move them into place, and then lift them to create huge buildings. The stones fit together so perfectly that you can't slip a piece of paper between them, yet nothing holds them in place except gravity. Despite the numerous earthquakes and volcanos in the Andean region, many Incan walls are still standing after hundreds of years."

"The Incas worshipped the sun. Their most important building was the temple to the sun god in their capital at Cusco. The temple was called Coricancha or Golden Temple. It was built of stone and the walls were covered in gold. The temple was large enough to hold 4,000 people. It also housed the mummies of former emperors."

Cusco

Cusco, or Cuzco, is derived from a Quechua word meaning "navel" or "center," reflecting its historical significance as the capital of the Inca Empire. The city is often referred to as "The Imperial City" and is located in southeastern Peru. The city had a population of up to 150,000 at its peak and was laid out in the form of a puma. It was dominated by fine buildings and

palaces. Cusco is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

The geographical location of the site, at an elevation of around 11,200 feet, is on an ancient glacier lake bed and at a central point between natural routes leading off to diverse surrounding regions. The basin is surrounded by mountain peaks. Crops could be grown in the valley, and the hills provided good pasture. Cusco is also the meeting point of three rivers — the Huatanay, Tullumayo, and Chunchul — making it especially significant and auspicious in the Inca mind. In typical Inca fashion, where nature was adapted but never abused, the rivers were canalized and diverted to create the space necessary for a large city.

Excerpt:

"The locals who lived near Machu Picchu later knew it was there, but they weren't interested in living in such a remote place either. The view is stunning, but it's not a welcoming place. It's difficult to reach and high in the mountains, easily overtaken by the cloud forests of the Peruvian mountains."

cloud forest

The extraordinary cloud forests of the Andes are a type of mid-altitude tropical rainforest that extends from about 3,000 feet in elevation up to about 8,000 feet. When humid air, transpired from the billions of trees in the lowland Amazon, moves west and up the mountain slopes of the Andes, some of it condenses and falls as rain or remains in the form of low clouds and mist. The terrain in cloud forests is often on steep slopes. These higher-elevation forests are characterized by waterfalls and quick-moving, shallow rivers. Trees are often covered in plants called epiphytes, which capture much of the moisture found in cloud forests.

Cloud forests are among the most biodiversity-rich biomes in the world, with a large number of species directly or indirectly depending on them.

Excerpt:

"Llamas were important to the Incas for their wool and for carrying supplies in the treacherous mountains, but they are not strong enough to have carried the stones for Machu Picchu."

llama

A llama is a domesticated South American ruminant mammal related to the camel and having a long neck and small head. It was formerly much used as a

beast of burden in the Andes, and is also kept on some ranches and petting zoos in North America. You might not want to get too close, though — when llamas feel annoyed or threatened, they spit.

A llama has a long neck and thick eyelashes, and looks kind of like a camel without a hump. Experts believe they originated in the plains of North America about 40 million years ago, eventually becoming extinct in that part of the world, though they migrated to South America. Llamas are used to carry heavy loads, to guard flocks of sheep and other animals, and for their soft wool.

Excerpts:

"So, what was the purpose of Machu Picchu? Why go to so much trouble to build in such a high and distant place? That is the greatest mystery of the palace in the clouds.

Machu Picchu was big enough to support perhaps 500 to 700 people. Out of an empire of 10 million people, that's not a large number—smaller than most modern towns. But people did live there—or at least died there. About 200 burials have been discovered at Machu Picchu, the skeletons of men and women. They appear to have died peacefully and not as sacrifices.

People buried at Machu Picchu came from different parts of the Incan Empire. Several of the skulls have a strange, almost alien appearance. They're much longer than typical human skulls. This has led some people to suggest that Machu Picchu was an outpost for extraterrestrials. A somewhat less exciting explanation is that some upper-class people from the Incan Empire bound their skulls with tight cords from a young age to make their heads grow longer."

"Was it a:

—prison for the royal family's enemies?

—retirement village for elderly nobles?

—pilgrimage site?

—monastery or convent for religious men or women to study the heavens?

—summer palace for the royal family?

—double scientific outpost for studying crops and stars?"

"There are still many parts of Machu Picchu that are covered with jungle or have not yet been excavated. There's at least one chamber in Machu Picchu that has never been opened. Some scientists who used radar to see inside think it might contain gold and silver—and answers about Machu Picchu's mysteries. Officials worry that opening the chamber could endanger the structure. They are not

convinced that there's anything inside worth the risk. But eventually, maybe a new discovery at Machu Picchu will reveal the secrets of the palace in the clouds."



Chapter 9: The Princes in the Tower

Excerpts:

"Richard III was remembered as a hunchback and a villain who cheated, lied, and murdered his way to the throne before Henry Tudor rid the world of him and dumped him in a forgotten grave. But history is written by the winners, and recent historians have questioned the stories handed down by the Tudors."

"The most notorious and wicked of the rumors about Richard III was that he secured the throne by murdering his two young nephews—the Princes in the Tower—who vanished without a trace during his short reign. How much of that story was true?"

Richard III of England

Richard was created Duke of Gloucester in 1461 after the accession to the throne of his older brother Edward IV. This was during the period known as the Wars of the Roses. He became King of England on 26 June 1483 and ruled until his death on August 22, 1485, at the Battle of Bosworth Field, which was the last major battle of the Wars of the Roses. The battle resulted in the rise of Henry Tudor, who became King Henry VII and marked the end of the Middle Ages in England.

For almost 500 years after his death, Richard III was generally depicted as the worst and most wicked of kings. Some of those charges are now regarded as excessive, the work of his enemies, and his supporters have attempted to rehabilitate him. Modern scholars take a more-balanced approach that avoids the extremes of either side.

Wars of the Roses

The Wars of the Roses (1455–85) was the series of dynastic civil wars whose violence and civil strife eventually resulted in the strong government of the Tudors. Fought between the houses of Lancaster and York for the English throne, the wars were named many years afterward from the supposed badges of the contending parties: the white rose of York and the red rose of Lancaster.

Princes in the Tower

The term "Princes in the Tower" refers to the mysterious disappearance of Edward V and his younger brother Richard, Duke of York, heirs to the throne of King Edward IV. The princes, aged 12 and 9 years old, respectively, had been left in the care of Edward's brother, the future Richard III. They were last seen in the Tower of London (a royal residence as well as a prison) in 1483. It is widely believed that they were murdered to prevent Edward V's coronation, possibly on the orders of their uncle, Richard III, who then took the throne.

The only evidence is circumstantial. In 1674, workmen at the Tower of London excavated, from under a staircase, a wooden box containing two small human skeletons. The bones were widely accepted at the time as those of the princes, but this has not been proven and is far from certain. The bones were buried in Westminster Abbey, where they remain.

nephew

A son of one's brother or sister or of the brother or sister of one's spouse. The word was originally also used to mean a grandson or remoter lineal descendant and an illegitimate son of a clergyman. It was also, until about 1400, pronounced as *nev-u*.

Related to the word "nephew" is the word "nepotism," which means "favoritism shown to relatives, especially in appointment to high office." It comes from Latin *nepotem*, meaning "grandson or nephew."

throne

A throne is a chair occupied by a monarch or prelate, as a mark of rank or distinction. In an abstract sense, it can also refer to the person who occupies a throne.

A throne is a symbol of divine and secular rule and the establishment of a throne as a defining sign of the claim to power and authority. The expression "ascend (mount) the throne" takes its meaning from the steps leading up to the dais or platform on which the throne is placed. Coats of arms or insignia can feature on throne or canopy and represent the dynasty. Even in the physical absence of the ruler an empty throne can symbolize the everlasting presence of the monarchical authority.

In practice, any chair the monarch occupied in a formal setting served as a throne, though there were often special chairs used only for this purpose. Thrones began to be made in pairs, for the king and queen, which remained common in later periods.

The colloquial meaning "toilet" arose by 1960.

Excerpts:

"They [the princes] had been seen from time to time playing on the grounds of the Tower of London. A doctor had been brought in to attend to Edward V. Then, they were seen less and less, until they finally vanished as if they had never been in the Tower.

Richard was away from London when the boys disappeared, giving him an alibi, but he could have ordered his servants to kill the princes. Some of them might have been loyal enough to do it, and rumors claimed that they had, but there's no proof it ever happened."

"Richard had generally been considered a good man, loyal to his brother and to England. That was why many people had wanted him to be king.

But power corrupts, as the saying goes, and maybe Richard decided he didn't want to give up the throne and that it would be easier if the boys just disappeared."

"None of the boys' family members ever accused Richard III of their deaths, including their mother, Elizabeth Woodville. During his lifetime, they might have been afraid to speak up, but once he was gone, it could have helped them gain favor with Henry Tudor if they denounced Richard III — even if they only suspected him of murder. But none of them ever did. Other people point a finger at Richard III's conqueror, Henry Tudor, who became King Henry VII, as the murderer of the princes. But there's no proof."

"What if the princes didn't die in the Tower? A supporter might have helped them escape. Richard III also might have hidden his nephews away to protect them from being kidnapped by other people who wanted to control the throne. If that is the case, and he did it to protect his nephews and England, then he was heroic for allowing people to say terrible things about him to protect his family and his country."



Chapter 10: The Stolen City of Zimbabwe

Excerpts:

"How could someone steal an entire city? It might seem impossible, but people have torn down or moved ancient buildings and monuments by taking the stones one by one."

"The stones of Great Zimbabwe in southern Africa are still mostly intact. People stole something more important from the Medieval city: its memory and identity. Great Zimbabwe impressed later explorers so much that they wanted to give their own people the credit for building it. They also wanted to take credit away from the Shona people of southern Africa whose ancestors created the city. Even now, there's much we don't know about Great Zimbabwe because of the stolen stories and artifacts. Enough is left, though, to show that it was one of the wealthiest and most impressive cities of the Middle Ages."

Great Zimbabwe

Great Zimbabwe is the extensive stone ruins of an African Iron Age city. It lies in the southeastern part of the modern country of Zimbabwe. The central area of ruins extends about 200 acres, making Great Zimbabwe the largest of more than 150 major stone ruins scattered across the countries of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Great Zimbabwe was the heart of a thriving trading empire from the 11th to the 15th centuries, then abandoned in the 16th or 17th century. It is recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The word zimbabwe is a Shona (Bantu) word meaning "stone houses." The word "great" distinguishes the site from the many smaller ruins, known as "zimbabwes," spread across the Zimbabwe Highveld. There are around 200 such sites in Southern Africa.

It is estimated that the central ruins and surrounding valley supported a Shona population of 10,000 to 20,000. The economy was based on cattle husbandry, crop cultivation, and the trade of gold on the coast of the Indian Ocean. Historians estimate that almost half of the gold in the Medieval world came from around Great Zimbabwe.

The heart of Great Zimbabwe is a huge, circular, structure called the Great Enclosure. The walls are twenty feet wide and thirty-six feet high. Inside is a giant, round tower. The tower is thirty feet tall, or about three stories high, and eighteen feet wide.

Shona architecture of drystone walling goes far back in history. It consists of walls, walled stairs on hilltops, free-standing drystone walls, and platform terraces, constructed from stones without any mortar to bind them together. A certain amount of binding is obtained through the use of carefully selected interlocking stones.

Outside of Great Zimbabwe are the ruins of many houses built of local mud

brick. About 20,000 people lived at Great Zimbabwe in the 1300s and 1400s. For that time, it was a large city—as big as London.

The first confirmed visits by Europeans were in the late 19th century, with investigations of the site starting in 1871. Great Zimbabwe and surrounding sites were looted by European antiquarians between the 1890s and 1920s. Some later studies of the monument were controversial, as the white government of Rhodesia pressured archaeologists to deny its construction by black Africans. Its African origin only became consensus by the 1950s.

The Shona people

The Shona is a group of culturally similar Bantu-speaking peoples, living chiefly in Zimbabwe where they form the majority of the population.

The Shona are farmers of millet, sorghum, and corn (maize), the last being the primary staple, and a variety of other crops such as rice, beans, peanuts (groundnuts), and sweet potatoes. Cattle are kept by most groups for their milk, as well as for prestige, as a store of value, and for bride-price payments.

Villages consist of clustered mud and wattle huts, granaries, and common cattle kraals (pens) and typically accommodate one or more interrelated families. Personal and political relations are largely governed by a kinship system. Descent, succession, and inheritance, with the exception of a few groups that are matrilineal, follow the male line. Chiefdoms, wards, and villages are administered by hereditary leaders.

Shona traditional culture, now fast declining, was noted for its excellent ironwork, good pottery, and expert musicianship. There is belief in a creator-god, Mwari, and a concern to propitiate ancestral and other spirits to ensure good health, rain, and success in enterprise. Elementary education, Christian missions, and partial urbanization have weakened traditional institutions and leadership. However, magic and witchcraft continue as important means of social control and explanations for disasters.

sorghum

Sorghum is a cane-like cereal grain grass with edible starchy seeds. It is also known as Indian millet, broomcorn, great millet, Guinea corn, or jowar. It is typically an annual plant, but some cultivars are perennial. The plant likely originated in Africa, where it is a major food crop, and has numerous varieties. It is especially valued in hot and arid regions for its resistance to drought and heat, and usually grows to a height of 2 to 8 feet, sometimes reaching as high as 15 feet.

For human consumption, the gluten-free grain is usually ground into a meal that is made into porridge, flatbreads, and cakes. The grain is also used in making edible oil, starch, dextrose (a sugar), paste, and alcoholic beverages. The stalks are used as fodder and building materials. Sweet sorghums, or sorghos, are grown mainly in the US and southern Africa for forage and for syrup manufacture and are sometimes used in the production of ethyl alcohol for biofuel.

Excerpts:

"...common at Great Zimbabwe are carvings and statues of birds, often sitting on columns. This bird symbol has never been found elsewhere in African archeology; it exists only in Zimbabwe. And it doesn't seem to be a specific bird that can be identified, but more of an abstract symbol. "

"...so-called archeologists stole anything they considered valuable—including gold and some of the soapstone bird carvings. They trashed the rest of their findings, such as pottery and metal tools. And when these untrained "archeologists" did save an item, they didn't record exactly where they found it or what was found nearby. That is essential in archeology, where, ideally, an item is studied where it is found to discover as many clues as possible. What clues might they have uncovered and destroyed-information about the gold mining, the size of the city, the bird symbols, or even why the city declined?"

"Using the justification that the ruins and the mines didn't belong to the Shona, the European powers conquered Zimbabwe and the Shona people. They created a country they called Rhodesia after a British explorer. In the process, they destroyed clues about the history of Zimbabwe, leaving us with many mysteries about the city and its downfall."

"In 1980, the African people of Rhodesia finally won their independence. They called their new country Zimbabwe after the ruins. They included the bird figure on their national flag, a reminder that part of their history had been stolen, but they hadn't been erased.

Now, African scholars are working to rediscover their history and solve the mysteries of Zimbabwe."



Excerpts: (*the author is discussing the Medieval Dance Mania*)

"Pandemics and plagues have been a problem for human settlements throughout history. The Middle Ages were no exception. The Black Death killed millions of people. In some places, the death rate was almost 100 percent, with entire towns wiped out."

"The Middle Ages were a time of great stress. Sometimes, people react to stress in odd ways, such as by fainting, laughing, shaking, or perhaps even dancing. And when we're told not to do something, like bite our fingernails or think of a pink elephant, that often becomes the thing we badly want to do. So, is it possible that people were dancing because they'd heard the legend of the dancing curse and were afraid that they might start dancing?"

flash mob

A flash mob is a group of people who suddenly (and unexpectedly, to their chosen audience) gather in a public place to perform a brief, coordinated performance, often consisting of entertainment or artistic expression, before quickly dispersing. This performance is usually organized through social media or text messages. Mob organizers normally have a few rehearsals, or have an instructional video online for participants to practice with.

The first flash mobs were created in Manhattan in 2003, by Bill Wasik, senior editor of *Harper's Magazine*. Wasik claimed that he created flash mobs as a social experiment designed to poke fun at hipsters and to highlight the cultural atmosphere of conformity and of wanting to be an insider or part of "the next big thing."

In Wasik's words, "seeing how all culture in New York was demonstrably commingled with scenesterism ... it should theoretically be possible to create an art project consisting of pure scene — meaning the scene would be the entire point of the work."

The earliest meet-ups spread through technology were used as political tools. The Philippines and Spain had already seen protests form through text message and cell phone; the 1999 World Trade Organization riots in Seattle were mobilized through cell phone contact.

By the mid-2010s, flash mobs had become marketing clichés, co-opted for promotional purposes. Every major brand seemed to have a flash mob campaign, from car companies to clothing retailers to fast food chains. The commercialization killed much of what made flash mobs special, though when done well, the power of collective spectacle remains.

scenester

A scenester is a non-musician who is active in a particular musical scene or someone who associates with a prominent, usually fashionable, group of people. It typically involves adopting styles and attitudes of a specific subculture to gain social status within that group.

hipster

A hipster is someone who is exceptionally aware of or interested in the latest trends and tastes, especially in areas like fashion and music. In other words, a person who is hip.

The subculture is defined by claims to authenticity and uniqueness, but actually conforms to a style commodifying the idea of rebellion or counterculture. Fashion is one of the major markers of hipster identity. The word hipster is often used as a pejorative for someone who is pretentious or overly concerned with appearing trendy.

Comment:

Because we researched medieval dance mania for a previous chapter titled *The Dancing Mania*, we don't believe that modern flash mobs are comparable. Flash mobs are planned, not spontaneous. And they don't result in death. In our chapter, Dr. John Waller characterizes choreomania (dance mania) as a "mass psychogenic illness" potentially brought on by exacerbated social and economic stress.



Chapter 12: Yasuke the Black Samurai

Excerpts:

"Medieval Japan was ruled by an emperor, though true power often rested with the Japanese nobles. From the late 1100s on, these leaders were the shoguns, or military leaders from the samurai class."

"In 1582, a group of captured Japanese warriors were brought before the samurai general Akechi Mitsuhide. Mitsuhide looked over the men, prepared to kill them as captured enemies. But one of the men troubled him. This man was African, though he fought alongside the Japanese samurai. The African samurai, Yasuke, was sent to the [Jesuit] church. He was never heard from again. But just as mysterious as his fate is where he came from."

Yasuke

Yasuke (c. 1555 - unknown), a valet and bodyguard of the Jesuit missionary Alessandro Valignano, rose to become a member of the inner circle of the warlord Oda Nobunaga, Japan's first "great unifier." Yasuke is commonly held by Japanese historians to be the first recorded "samurai" of foreign birth.

Nobunaga originally summoned Yasuke out of a desire to see a black man. He doubted the authenticity of Yasuke's skin color, suspecting it was ink. This led to an unusual spectacle where Yasuke was ordered to strip from the waist up and scrub his skin. The revelation that his skin was naturally black fascinated Nobunaga, who then took an interest in him.

As a samurai, Yasuke was granted a sword, a house and a stipend. When Nobunaga was defeated by Akechi Mitsuhide, Yasuke was captured and sent back to the Jesuits. There are no subsequent records of his life. Yasuke is the first known African to appear in Japanese historical records and continues to be featured in manga, anime, literature, and film.

Akechi Mitsuhide

Akechi Mitsuhide (1528 - 1582), a samurai and general during Japan's turbulent Sengoku period, is most famously known for turning against his lord, Oda Nobunaga, in 1582—a move that drastically changed the course of Japanese history.

Historians remain divided on Mitsuhide's motives. One theory suggests personal vengeance: Nobunaga had reportedly humiliated Mitsuhide publicly and seized his lands. Others argue that Mitsuhide disagreed with Nobunaga's increasingly autocratic rule and brutal methods, including the destruction of Buddhist temples and mass executions. Some see the betrayal as an opportunistic power grab in a volatile political environment.

Was he villain or visionary, opportunist or reformer? It is this complexity that ensures his continued fascination for historians and storytellers alike.

Excerpt:

"Nobunaga was the leading shogun in Japan at the time. Nobunaga was impressed by Yasuke's size (over six feet tall), but even more so by his intellect. Yasuke learned Japanese quickly and told Nobunaga about his travels. He then introduced the arts-loving warlord to Utenzi — traditional Swahili poetry. Nobunaga was so impressed, he invited Yasuke to be one of the favored few who dined with him and discussed the important matters facing Japan."

Oda Nobunaga

Oda Nobunaga was a prominent Japanese feudal lord and military leader during the Sengoku period, known for his role in unifying Japan in the late 16th century. He is often referred to as the "Demon King of the Sixth Heaven" and is recognized for his innovative military tactics and efforts to consolidate power, paving the way for future unification. Nobunaga's rule was also noted for fostering of free trade, reforms of Japan's civil government, and the start of the Momoyama historical art period, but also for the brutal suppression of those who refused to cooperate or yield to his demands.

Nobunaga committed seppuku (ritual suicide) in 1582, when his retainer Akechi Mitsuhide ambushed and trapped him in a temple in Kyoto. Nobunaga was succeeded by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who along with Tokugawa Ieyasu completed his campaign of national unification shortly afterward.

emperor

An emperor is a leader of undisputed power who controls a nation or, more usually, a number of subjugated nations known collectively as an empire.

Nowadays the emperor has been replaced by humbler and usually more democratic leaders, but the notion of an all-conquering larger-than-life figure lives on in the way we give the prefix emperor to particularly magnificent specimens of living things: the Emperor Butterfly, Emperor Moth, and Emperor Penguin, most famously.

The words emperor, caesar, czar, and Kaiser all go back to one source: the title of the first Roman emperor, Emperor Caesar Augustus. Augustus was the adopted son of the Roman general and ruler Julius Caesar and he took the name Caesar as part of his official name. Later Roman emperors did the same, and thus caesar came to mean "an emperor of Rome." The word caesar was borrowed into Germanic languages as Kaiser, or "a ruler in Germany." Through the Russian word tsar, which also came from kaiser, we got our word czar, meaning "a ruler in Russia." The word emperor can be traced to Latin *imperator*, a title given to great Roman generals which meant "commander."

Emperors are generally recognized to be of the highest honor and rank, surpassing king. In Europe, the title of Emperor has been used since the Middle Ages, considered in those times equal or almost equal in dignity to that of Pope. The emperor of Japan is the only currently reigning monarch whose title is translated into English as "Emperor."



Chapter 13: The race to the "New World"

Excerpt:

"One of the mysteries of the Middle Ages is just how much contact the people of Africa, Europe, and Asia had with American peoples—and which of the "Old World" peoples reached the "New World" of the Americas first."

Candidates for winner of the race are: Christopher Columbus, the Vikings, Irish St. Brendan the Navigator in the 500s, the Celtic Madoc ab Owain Gwynedd in 1170, the Romans, Africans, Polynesians, and the Chinese.

Excerpt: Columbus

"Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain to the Caribbean islands in 1492. He was looking for a faster route to Asia for trading spices and other valuable items. He didn't realize he had stumbled upon a different continent, so he called the native people 'Indians.'

Columbus is admired by some for his bravery in trying a new route. He is hated by others for his terrible treatment of the native peoples. Regardless, his voyage connected two lands that had long been separated, changing the world forever."

Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus (1451 – 1506) was an Italian explorer and navigator from the Republic of Genoa who completed four Spanish-based voyages across the Atlantic Ocean sponsored by the Catholic Monarchs, opening the way for European exploration and colonization of the Americas. Largely self-educated, Columbus was knowledgeable in geography, astronomy, and history. He has long been called the "discoverer" of the New World, although the Vikings had visited North America five centuries earlier.

Columbus left Castile in August 1492 with three ships and made landfall in the Americas on 12 October. He landed in the Bahamas, then visited Cuba and Hispaniola, establishing a colony in what is now Haiti. Columbus returned to Castile in early 1493, with captured natives. Word of his voyage soon spread throughout Europe.

Columbus made three further voyages to the Americas, exploring the Lesser Antilles in 1493, Trinidad and the northern coast of South America in 1498, and the east coast of Central America in 1502. Columbus's strained relationship with the Crown of Castile and its colonial administrators in America led to his arrest and removal from Hispaniola in 1500, and later to protracted litigation over the privileges he and his heirs claimed were owed to them by the Crown.

Diseases introduced from the Old World contributed to the depopulation of Hispaniola's indigenous Taíno people, who were also subject to enslavement and other mistreatments by Columbus's government. Increased public awareness of these interactions has led to Columbus being less celebrated in Western culture, which has historically idealized him as a heroic discoverer. Columbus had always claimed that the conversion of non-believers was one reason for his explorations, and he produced a books during his later years called *Book of Prophecies* (1505), in which passages from the Bible were used to place his achievements as an explorer in the context of Christian eschatology.

Excerpt: Vikings

"We know the Vikings of Scandinavia voyaged to the Americas around the year 1000. Their clever sailors had settlements on Iceland and Greenland. It wasn't much farther to reach what is now Canada. Norse sagas tell stories about a place the Vikings called Vinland and a people known to them as Skraelings."

Vikings

The Vikings were Scandinavian seafaring warriors who used their longships to raid and colonize wide areas of Europe, even as far as Arabia, from the 9th to the 11th century. Their influence was substantial in virtually every aspect of life. They founded Dublin, colonized Normandy (land of the Northmen) in France, established the area of the Danelaw in Britain, and settled in many communities throughout Scotland. The word "Viking" comes from the early Scandinavian word *vikingr*, meaning pirate.

Viking navigators founded independent settlements in the Shetland, Orkney, and Faroe Islands, as well as in Iceland, Greenland, and L'Anse aux Meadows, a short-lived settlement in Newfoundland, circa 1000. The Greenland settlement was established around 980, during the Medieval Warm Period, and its demise by the mid-15th century may have been partly due to climate change.

Although the Vikings were great warriors and their name in the present day is almost synonymous with warfare, slaughter, and destruction — an association encouraged by popular media representations — the Scandinavian culture was actually highly developed and the Viking raids on other nations were only one aspect of the civilization.

The Vikings spoke Old Norse and made inscriptions in runes. For most of the Viking Age, they followed the Old Norse religion, but became Christians over the 8th–12th centuries. The Vikings had their own laws, art, and architecture.

They were warriors at sea but, at home, they were farmers, fishermen, craftsmen, and traders.

Scandinavian culture divided society into three classes, the Jarls (aristocracy), Karls (lower class), and Thralls (slaves). Upward mobility was possible for Karls but not Thralls. Slavery was widely practiced throughout Scandinavia and is considered one of the prime motivators for the Viking raids on other lands.

Women had greater freedoms in Scandinavian/Viking culture than in many others. They could inherit property, choose where and how to live if unmarried, represent themselves in legal cases, and own their own businesses (such as breweries, taverns, shops, and farms). Women were the prophetesses of either the goddess Freyja or the god Odin — there were no male religious leaders — and interpreted the gods' messages for the people.

Marriages were arranged by the men of the clan, and a woman could not choose her own mate — but neither could a man. Women were responsible for raising children and keeping the house but both men and women prepared meals for the family.

A significant source of income was trading amber, the fossilized resin of the pine tree, which they had in abundance. Amber frequently washed up on the shores around Scandinavia and was worked into jewelry or sold in semi-processed form, especially to the Roman and Byzantine empires. The Norse regularly plied the Volga with their trade goods: furs, tusks, seal fat for boat sealant, amber, and slaves.

Excerpt:

"L'Anse aux Meadows, a UNESCO world heritage site on the northernmost tip of the island of Newfoundland, is the first and only known site established by Vikings in North America and the earliest evidence of European settlement in the New World."

L'Anse aux Meadows

L'Anse aux Meadows is the site of an 11th-century Norse outpost at the tip of Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula. It is believed to be the first European settlement in North America and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978. L'Anse aux Meadows is a French-English name which can be translated as "Grassland Bay" (lit. "the bay with the grasslands").

First excavated in the 1960s, the archeological site spans 31 square miles of land and sea, and contains the remains of eight buildings constructed of sod

over a wood frame, with over 800 Norse objects unearthed, including bronze, bone, and stone artifacts, and evidence of iron production.

With carbon dating estimates between 990 and 1050 CE and tree-ring dating of 1021, L'Anse aux Meadows is the only undisputed site of pre-Columbian trans-oceanic contact of Europeans with the Americas outside of Greenland. It is evidence of the Norse presence in North America and for its possible connection with the accounts of Leif Erikson in the *Saga of the Greenlanders* and the *Saga of Erik the Red*, which were written down in the 13th century. Archaeological evidence suggests the settlement served as a base camp for Norse exploration of North America, including regions to the south.

Before the Norse arrived in Newfoundland, there is evidence of occupations by five Indigenous groups at the site of L'Anse aux Meadows, the oldest dated to roughly 6,000 years ago. None were contemporaneous with the Norse occupation.

Excerpts: Celts

"Old European maps and myths often tell of a forgotten paradise to the West, such as Avalon or Antilia. The west is where the sun sets, so it could be that these paradises were symbolic of Heaven or an afterlife, but it could also be that early European sailors had discovered islands to the west."

"For instance, the Celtic people have legends about early voyages to the Americas. One is about the Irish Saint Brendan the Navigator in the 500s and another is about the Welsh Prince Madoc in the 1100s."

St. Brendan

St. Brendan (c. 484 - 578), also known as Brendan the Navigator, was a monk who lived in 6th century Ireland. Much of what we know comes from the tales of a fantastic voyage he took to find the Isle of The Blessed, now often called St. Brendan's Island. The stories were recorded in Latin prose sometime between the mid-8th and early 10th century under the name *Voyage of Saint Brendan the Abbot*).

St. Brendan, with a small crew, set out in a boat made of wood and leather. For several years, they traveled from island to island. Along the way he saw many things — strange creatures, biblical figures and strange sights.

The *Voyage* records Brendan and crew having a fire on the back of a whale. It describes islands with sheep, birds, plentiful fruit, and fiery forges. The crew

saw a silver crystal column in the sea and had to contend with sea monsters, rocky coastline and long bouts of fog. Finally the monk and his crew arrived on an island so large that after 40 days exploring he found no limit to it. The return journey is not recorded but the *Voyage* ends with Brendan spending his last days peacefully in Ireland.

Might the island of fire and forges be a volcanically active Iceland? Maybe the crystal column is an iceberg? And fog-shrouded rocky coastlines sound all too familiar in Newfoundland. We don't know. Ancient texts were often based on oral histories and written long after the events occurred.

In 1976, adventurer Tim Severin set out to test St. Brendan's voyage. He built a replica boat from wood and ox hide and set out from Kerry in Ireland into the north Atlantic. Over the course of 13 months, travelling island-to-island, Severin and his crew made it to Peckford Island off northeastern Newfoundland.

Severin showed that the technology of the ancient Irish could have made a transatlantic voyage. It doesn't, of course, offer any proof as to whether they did actually make such a visit.

Prince Madoc

Madoc (Madog ab Owain Gwynedd), possibly a younger son of Owain the Great, king of Gwynedd in North Wales or perhaps a member of his bodyguard, is credited in the 1500s with making the first voyage to America. The story was of value to the Elizabethans as it gave them a polemical argument to use against Spanish claims to America, since Elizabeth I could be put forward as the heir to the Welsh princes.

Prince Madog returned to Wales with great tales of his adventures and persuaded others to return to America with him. They sailed from Lundy Island in 1171, but were never heard of again.

They are believed to have landed at Mobile Bay, Alabama, and then travelled up the Alabama River along which there are several stone forts, said by the local Cherokee tribes to have been constructed by "White People." These structures have been dated to several hundred years before the arrival of Columbus and are said to be of a similar design to Dolwyddelan Castle in North Wales.

Early explorers and pioneers found evidence of possible Welsh influence among the native tribes of America along the Tennessee and Missouri Rivers. In the 18th century one local tribe was discovered that seemed different to all the others that had been encountered before. Called the Mandans, this tribe

were described as white men with forts, towns and permanent villages laid out in streets and squares. They claimed ancestry with the Welsh and spoke a language remarkably similar to it. Instead of canoes, Mandans fished from coracles, an ancient type of boat still found in Wales today. It was also observed that unlike members of other tribes, these people grew white-haired with age. In addition, in 1799, Governor John Sevier of Tennessee wrote a report in which he mentioned the discovery of six skeletons encased in brass armor bearing the Welsh coat of arms.

Unfortunately, the Mandan tribe was virtually wiped out by a smallpox epidemic introduced by traders in 1837.

Excerpts: Romans

"The Aztec god Quetzalcoatl is sometimes used as an argument that early Europeans reached the Americas. Quetzalcoatl is described as a white-skinned, bearded god who went into the East and promised to return. This could refer to a European visitor."

"The Tecaxic-Calixtlahuaca head may be the best evidence for possible European contact with early American peoples. This carved head was found buried with Aztec artifacts from before the Spanish arrived. Yet it's not Aztec; it's Roman. Historians generally agree that it's real. It may show that Romans at some point reached the Americas and traded with peoples there."

Excerpts: Africans

"Egyptians: Early historians noted the similarities between American and Egyptian pyramids. Two cultures could both have invented pyramids, but traces of the American tobacco plant have been found with Egyptian mummies. Possibly, the mummies were contaminated by modern archeologists who smoked tobacco in pipes, but there also could have been forgotten trade between the two cultures."

"The Mali Empire: Founded in the 1200s, Mali became a wealthy Arab-African Empire on the west coast of Africa. According to the story, Mansa (ruler) Muhammad ibn Ou believed that it was possible to sail across the whole ocean, so he sent out a fleet of ships. He told them to keep sailing until they reached the end of the Atlantic or ran out of provisions. The ships reached a "great river" in the ocean—a strong current. One of the ships reported this to the emperor.

According to the story, the excited emperor set off in his ships

to explore the ocean and never returned.

But that doesn't mean a smaller expedition couldn't have reached the Americas. The great river in the ocean is likely the Canary Current. This strong current would easily carry ships from Africa to the Americas but would make it very difficult for any ships to sail back. This could explain why the ships went out but didn't return."

Excerpt: Polynesians

"Genetic studies show a relationship between Polynesians and South American people. Considering how widely the Polynesians traveled, it would not be surprising that they had contact with the Americas. The Rapa Nui use of sweet potatoes — a food from the Americas — makes another strong argument for communication between the cultures. Though it is possible that sweet potatoes ended up in the ocean and floated to Pacific Islands, it's more likely that food was traded between South American and Pacific peoples."

Excerpt: Chinese

"The Jianwen (Civil) Emperor of Ming China, Zhu Yunwen, ruled China for a short time in the late 1300s. One of his uncles, Zhu Di, overthrew him and presented a burned body he claimed was the Jianwen Emperor. Yet many people believed the Jianwen Emperor had escaped. The Jianwen Emperor had been known as a kind and just ruler, so they may have only wished that he was alive. It's hard to know because his uncle burned histories about him and tried to erase his legacy.

One of Zhu Di's most important allies was the admiral Zheng He. The new emperor sent Zheng on several treasure expeditions. Many people believed he was actually hunting for the missing Jianwen Emperor. Whether or not the Jianwen Emperor escaped, and whether Zheng found him, Zheng was a great sailor. He traveled between China, Southeast Asia, India, Arabia, and Africa. Some historians think he also might have sailed as far as America. It's impossible to know for certain because later emperors destroyed the records of Zhu Di. But even if Zheng didn't reach America in his impressive adventures, earlier Chinese explorers might have.

Chinese legends mention a mythical land to the east called Fusang. Some Chinese poems call Japan Fusang, but in the older stories about Fusang, it's a greater distance away—as far as the West Coast of North America. Fusang appears on a copy of a map brought back to Europe by explorer Marco Polo, who traveled from Italy to China in the 1200s. The copy appears to show Alaska, but

we don't have the original map from the 1200s, so we don't know if it showed Alaska or if Alaska was added later.

It would not be difficult for explorers or traders to go from Asia to Alaska, though. In modern times, shipwrecked Japanese sailors have washed up on the west coast of the Americas, so it certainly could have happened in the past as well."



Food for Thought (Excerpts from the book)

"When times are dark, it sometimes brings out the hero in people."

"King Arthur and his soldiers would not have worn heavy plate armor or jousted, both of which were later inventions."
(King Arthur)

"The formula for Greek Fire remains a mystery."
(Secret Fire)

"The Polynesian people of the Pacific Ocean saw the waters as a great highway."
(The Silent Sentinels of the Rapa Nui)

"An English bishop suggested that the children were extraterrestrial aliens in his book, *The Man in the Moone*. It was one of the first science fiction stories ever written."
(The Green Children in the Wolf Pit)

"Genghis Khan ruled an area four times larger than the Roman Empire at its height."
(Lost Treasure of the Steppes)

"Even though there are no signs of attacks on the city, it appears that Cahokia's leaders often reinforced their defenses, making the walls stronger. They weren't fighting anyone, but they were afraid of something."
(The Forgotten City of the Mississippi)

"While she was a widow, a woman could own property and manage her own

business. Once a woman married, her husband took control of everything she had. Legally, she ceased to exist as a person and became her husband's property."

(Alice Kyteler: Black Widow, Witch, or Wily Woman?)

"Andean cloud forests are home to the greatest number of the world's orchids."

(Palace in the Clouds)

"But history is written by the winners."

(The Princes in the Tower)

"Now, African scholars are working to rediscover their history and solve the mysteries of Zimbabwe."

(The Stolen City of Zimbabwe)

"Mass hysteria happens when one person's panic spreads to the people around them."

(Deadly Medieval Flash Mobs)

"A Japanese painting from this time (1500s) depicts a black man sumo wrestling. Many historians believe it's Yasuke."

(Yasuke the Black Samurai)

"... one of the mysteries of the Middle Ages is just how much contact the people of Africa, Europe, and Asia had with American peoples-and which of the "Old World" peoples reached the "New World" of the Americas first."

(The Race to the "New World")



The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages

Terence Scully, author and now retired professor, published *The Art of Cookery in the Middle Ages* in 1995. Combining common sense and scholarship, the author treats practically all aspects of the art of cooking and dining and will interest both specialists and general readers.

The master cook who worked in the noble kitchens of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was as practical and knowledgeable as any chef today. His apprenticeship taught him culinary skills which had to be practiced without electricity, running water, or clocks, at the same time dealing with a wide repertoire of seasonal dishes and foreign cuisine. He was also required to understand the inherent qualities of the foodstuffs he handled, as determined by contemporary medical theories about the "four humors," and to know the lean-day strictures of the Church. Research in original manuscript sources makes this a fascinating and authoritative study.

An extensive table of contents reveals the breadth of detailed information about the medieval kitchen and the foods it produced. This includes details regarding attitudes, manners, cooking for the sick, and daily life. Last but certainly not least, for those of us who like to experiment, there is an assortment of recipes.



Words and Phrases

habit

"What we eat is largely a matter of habit. ... What we bring into our kitchens, cook and serve to ourselves tends to be repeated, within certain limits, from week to week and from month to month. We know that we can handle these preparations without too much fuss and without unreasonable expense; above all we know from experience that we are not going to dislike the finished dish when we sit down to eat it. We know that when we set our fork into our food our hunger is going to be eased, and sometimes even that we shall have a certain degree of pleasure in satisfying our appetite."

"Habit" is defined as:

- acquired mode of behavior
- clothing characteristic of a calling, rank, or function
- an addiction

Like so many words that appeared in English in the centuries following the

Norman Conquest, habit came from French. That derived from the Latin words *habere*, which means "have, consist of," and *habitus*, which means "condition, or state of being." In the 13th century CE, the word habit first just referred to clothing, then to special clothing, such as a nun's habit. The meaning then progressed to the more common use of the word, which is "acquired mode of behavior." The meanings absorbed from one language to another are sometimes not a logical development. As with all language, meaning is established by usage and—dare we say it?—force of habit.

The specific development of habit to refer to drug addiction began in the 1800s, with reference to opium.

In 1890, William James, a pioneering philosopher and psychologist, addressed the subject of habit in his book, *The Principles of Psychology*. James viewed habit as natural tendency in order to navigate life. To him, "living creatures... are bundles of habits" and those habits that have "an innate tendency are called instincts." James also explains how habits can govern our lives. He states, "Any sequence of mental action which has been frequently repeated tends to perpetuate itself; so that we find ourselves automatically prompted to think, feel, or do what we have been before accustomed to think, feel, or do, under like circumstances, without any consciously formed purpose, or anticipated result." Some habits, however, may form on the basis of a single experience, particularly when emotions are involved.

The Free Dictionary offers these quotes:

—"An annoying habit ... like the habit of people who take nonfattening sweeteners in their coffee, and order chocolate mousse." (Marilyn Sharp)

—"Bad habits are like a comfortable bed; easy to get into, but hard to get out of." (Rev. Watson C. Blake)

appetite

"We know that when we set our fork into our food our hunger is going to be eased, and sometimes even that we shall have a certain degree of pleasure in satisfying our appetite."

"Appetite" can be defined as a strong wish or urge or craving, particularly for food and drink, although it can also be used to describe a desire for such things as power and stimulation. Appetite is often influenced by emotions, and environmental factors. It can vary from person to person and is distinct from the physical sensation of hunger.

Appetite as hunger for nourishment exists in all higher life-forms, and serves to regulate adequate energy intake. It is regulated by a close interplay between the digestive tract, adipose tissue and the brain. Appetitive behavior is the

only process that involves energy intake; all other behaviors involve release of energy.

Life is too short to be so serious. We've just ordered a pizza.

menu

"What the professional cook (of the upper classes) dealt with from day to day in the thirteen and fourteen hundreds were menus consisting of well-rounded meals of sops (modern "soups"), stews, pies, torts, flans, biscuits, roasts, sauces, jellies and desserts."

The word "menu" is defined as:

—a list of dishes to be served or available

—a list of available options

The word "menu", like much of the terminology of cuisine, is French in origin. It ultimately derives from Latin *minutus*, something made small; in French, it came to be applied to a detailed list or résumé of any kind. As such, it was used in the phrase *menu de repas*, "list of items of a meal," which then was shortened to just menu.

The original menus that offered choices to consumers were prepared on a small chalkboard, in French *a carte*; so foods chosen from a bill of fare are described as *à la carte*, or "according to the board," often with prices shown. *Table d'hôte* means a pre-established sequence of courses is offered.

Menus, as lists of prepared foods, have been discovered dating back to the Song dynasty in China during the Medieval period. In the larger cities of the time, merchants found a way to cater to busy customers who had little time or energy to prepare an evening meal. The variation in Chinese cuisine from different regions led caterers to create a list or menu for their patrons.

The earliest European menus, several of which survive from 1751 onwards, appear to have been for the relatively intimate and informal *soupers intimes* (intimate suppers) given by King Louis XV of France at the Château de Choisy for between 31 and 36 guests. Several seem to have been placed on the table, listing four courses, each with several dishes, plus dessert.

During the second half of the 18th century, and especially after the French Revolution in 1789, menus began to be used by restaurants. Before then, eating establishments or *tables d'hôte* served dishes chosen by the chef. Customers ate what the house was serving that day, as in contemporary banquets or buffets, and meals were served from a common table. The establishment of restaurants and restaurant menus allowed customers to

choose from a list of unseen dishes, which were produced to order according to the customer's selection. A *table d'hôte* establishment charged its customers a fixed price; the menu allowed customers to spend as much or as little money as they chose.

stew

"The ubiquitous stew pot, filled primarily with cereal grains or vegetables, was the source of most cooked foods for the lower classes."

The root of stew is the Old French *estuver*, "bathe or stew." In the 1300s, it also meant a "heated room," especially for hot-air or steam bathing. During this period the word was slang for a brothel or public bath house but, by the end of the century, it could mean "boil slowly, cook (meat. etc.) by simmering it in liquid."

Stew can be defined as:

- to cook food by slow simmering
- to infuse tea until it's bitter
- to be oppressed with heat or crowding
- to be troubled: "in a stew"
- to brood angrily
- a heterogeneous mixture

Today, "stew" generally means a combination of solid food ingredients that have been cooked in liquid and served in the resultant gravy. Ingredients can include any combination of vegetables and may include meat, especially tougher meats suitable for slow-cooking, such as beef, pork, venison, rabbit, lamb, poultry, sausages, and seafood. While water can be used as the cooking liquid, stock is also common. A small amount of red wine or other alcohol is sometimes added for flavor. Seasonings and flavorings may also be added.

The world's oldest known evidence of stew was found in Japan, dating to the Jōmon period, from 14,000 to 300 BCE. Amazonian tribes used the shells of turtles as vessels, boiling the entrails of the turtle and various other ingredients in them. There are recipes for pork stews and fish stews in the Roman cookery book *Apicius*, believed to date from the 4th century CE.

The first written reference to 'Irish stew' is in Byron's *The Devil's Drive* (1814): "The Devil ... dined on ... a rebel or so in an Irish stew."

Then there's the idiom "stew in one's own juice," which means to worry and suffer because of something you did. Adding a little wine to that might make you feel better. And perhaps your stew will taste better the next day.

recipe

"A recipe collection was compiled in manuscript form not for the cook in a noble or bourgeois household but for the master or mistress of that household. It served to document certain standards of an elite class. Occasionally revised with additions, deletions and modifications, occasionally copied, with the approval of the master or mistress in order to please a flattering friend or relative, a manuscript collection of recipes reposed in the household library, not in its kitchen."

A "recipe" is a set of instructions that describes how to prepare or make something, especially a dish of food. It can also mean a formula for a desired end, or "a recipe for success." Cookbooks, which are a collection of recipes, help reflect cultural identities and history.

In older English works, a recipe was called a "receipt." Both words, "receipt" and "recipe," were originally used to mean instructions on how to administer medicine.

The earliest known written recipes date to 1730 BCE and were recorded on cuneiform tablets found in Mesopotamia. Roman recipes are known starting in the 2nd century BCE with Cato the Elder's *De Agri Cultura*. Many authors of this period described eastern Mediterranean cooking in Greek and in Latin.

The large collection of recipes *De re coquinaria*, conventionally titled *Apicius*, appeared in the 4th or 5th century CE and is the only complete surviving cookbook from the classical world. It lists the courses served in a meal as *Gustatio* (appetizer), *Primae Mensae* (main course) and *Secundae Mensae* (dessert).

King Richard II of England commissioned a recipe book called *Forme of Cury* in 1390, and around the same time, another book was published entitled *Curye on English*, "cury" meaning cooking. Both books give an impression of how food for the noble classes was prepared and served in England at that time. By the 15th century, numerous manuscripts were appearing, detailing the recipes of the day.

cook

"Medieval cooks drew from the same foodstuff groups as do modern cooks. They used cereal grains, legumes (peas, beans), leafy vegetables and root vegetables, fruits from trees, shrubs and vines, nuts, meats, fish and poultry, eggs, milk and its products, oils and

fats, and condiments (herbs and spices), all in quite a broad variety. There was not a category of foodstuff that was unused in the Middle Ages to produce food for the table. A modern dietician, or even a modern conservationist, could not fault the medieval cook for a narrowness in his choice of food sources. At least potentially, the medieval diet was neither restricted, unhealthy nor monotonous."

As a noun, "cook" means a person who prepares food for eating.

As a verb, "cook" means:

- prepare food by boiling, baking, etc.
- subject to intense heat: "the town cooked in the sun"

As a slang term, "cook" can mean:

- to falsify, especially figures: "cook the books"
- to spoil or ruin (something)
- to happen: "what's cooking?"
- to prepare (drugs) by heating
- to play vigorously: "the band was cooking"

Cooking, also known as cookery or professionally as the culinary arts, is the art, science and craft of using heat to make food more palatable, digestible, nutritious, or safe. Cooking techniques and ingredients vary widely, from grilling food over an open fire, to using electric stoves, to baking in various types of ovens, to boiling and blanching in water. The various methods reflect local conditions, techniques and traditions. Cooking is an aspect of all human societies and a cultural universal.

Archaeological evidence from 300,000 years ago, in the form of ancient hearths, earth ovens, burnt animal bones, and flint, are found across Europe and the Middle East. The oldest evidence (via heated fish teeth from a deep cave) of controlled use of fire to cook food by archaic humans was dated to 780,000 years ago. The earliest hearths have now been reported to be at least 790,000 years old.

The movement of foods across the Atlantic from the New World, such as potatoes, tomatoes, maize, beans, bell pepper, chili pepper, vanilla, pumpkin, cassava, avocado, peanut, pecan, cashew, pineapple, blueberry, sunflower, chocolate, gourds, green beans, and squash, had a profound effect on Old World cooking. The reverse movement brought cattle, sheep, pigs, wheat, oats, barley, rice, apples, pears, peas, chickpeas, mustard, and carrots, from the Old World to the New World.

The phrase "cook someone's goose" means to spoil someone's plans. The first recorded use of this colloquial phrase was in 1851. There are several colorful

theories about the origin of this term. According to one, the inhabitants of a besieged town in the 1500s hung out a goose to show their attackers they were not starving; the enraged enemies then set fire to the town and thus cooked the goose. According to another, the term comes from the fable about the goose that laid golden eggs, which, when the farmer killed it to obtain the gold inside, left him with nothing but a goose to cook.

diet

The word "diet" first appeared in English in the 1200s. Its original meaning was the same as in modern English, "habitually taken food and drink." But diet was used in another sense too in the Middle and early modern English periods to mean "way of living." This is, in fact, the original meaning of diet's Greek ancestor *diaita*, which is derived from the verb *diaitasthan*, meaning "to lead one's life." In Greek, *diaita* had already come to be used more specifically for a way of living prescribed by a physician, a diet, or other regimen.

Researchers from the University of Bristol have uncovered, for the first time, definitive evidence that determines what types of food medieval peasants ate. Using chemical analysis of pottery fragments and animal bones found at one of England's earliest medieval villages, combined with detailed examination of a range of historical documents and accounts, the research has revealed the daily diet of medieval peasants.

Scarce historical documents reveal that the medieval peasant ate meat, fish, dairy products, fruit and vegetables but there is little direct evidence for this. The research team used the technique of organic residue analysis to chemically extract food residues from the remains of cooking pots used by peasants in a small village in Northamptonshire. Organic residue analysis is a scientific technique commonly used in archaeology. It is mainly used on pottery, which is the most common artefact found on archaeological sites worldwide.

The findings demonstrated that stews (or pottages) of meat (beef and mutton) and vegetables such as cabbage and leek, were the mainstay of the medieval peasant diet. The research also showed that dairy products, likely the 'green cheeses' known to be eaten by the peasantry, also played an important role in their diet.

"Diet," of course, also refers to the stringent regimes used today in order to lose weight. But we'd rather think of diet as meat and potatoes, and apple pie for dessert.

green cheese

"Green cheese" is a fresh cheese that has not thoroughly dried nor aged, which is white in color and usually round in shape. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives a reference from the year 1542 of the four sorts of cheese. The first is green cheese, which is not called "green" because of its color but for its newness or under-ripened state. The phrase is not commonly used to describe the color of a cheese, though there are some cheeses with a greenish tint, usually from mold or added herbs. The word "green" is often used to mean "new," as in "greenhorn," which refers to an inexperienced person.

garden

"When John of Garland drafted his *Dictionarius* sometime before the year 1250, he provided his reader a detailed inventory of the contents of a good Parisian garden. It is clear that some sort of domestic garden plot, with a fruit tree or two, was quite common even in the largest, most densely populated towns."

A "garden" is a planned space, usually outdoors, used for the cultivation, display, and enjoyment of plants and other forms of nature. The single feature identifying even the wildest wild garden is control.

The etymology of the word gardening refers to enclosure: it is from Anglo-French *gardin*, akin to Old High German *gard* or *gart*, an "enclosure or compound," as in Stuttgart. The words yard, court, and Latin *hortus* (meaning "garden," hence horticulture and orchard), are cognates—all referring to a defined enclosed space.

The term "garden" in British English refers to a small enclosed area of land, usually adjoining a building. This would be referred to as a yard in American English. The term garden has traditionally been more general. Zoos, which display wild animals in simulated natural habitats, were formerly called zoological gardens.

Gardens may include statuary, follies, pergolas, trellises, stumperies, dry creek beds, and water features such as fountains, ponds (with or without fish), waterfalls, or creeks. Some gardens are ornamental and some produce food crops; some provide both. Some traditional eastern gardens, such as Zen gardens, use plants sparsely or not at all.

The enclosure of outdoor space probably began around 10,000 BCE. After the emergence of the first civilizations, wealthy citizens began creating gardens for purely aesthetic purposes. Egyptian tomb paintings of the 16th century BCE are some of the earliest physical evidence of ornamental horticulture and landscape design depicting lotus ponds surrounded by symmetrical rows of

acacias and palms. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were renowned as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

In Greece, circa 350 BCE, there were gardens at the Academy of Athens, and Theophrastus, who wrote on botany, supposedly inherited a garden from Aristotle. The wealthiest Romans built extensive villa gardens with water features, topiary, roses, and shaded arcades. Archeological evidence survives at sites such as Hadrian's Villa. Vitruvius, a Roman author and engineer, wrote the oldest extant design manual in 27 BCE. *De architectura libri decem* (Ten Books on Architecture) addressed design theory, landscape architecture, engineering, water supply, and public projects, such as parks and squares.

In the medieval garden, monasteries carried on a tradition of garden design and intense horticultural techniques, the variety of different purposes for the gardens serving as testament to their sophistication.

Generally, monastic garden types consisted of kitchen gardens, infirmary gardens, cemetery orchards, cloister garths and vineyards. Individual monasteries might also have a "green court," a plot of grass and trees where horses could graze, as well as a cellarer's garden or private gardens for monks.

Raised banks covered in turf called "turf seats" were constructed to provide seating in the garden. Fruit trees were prevalent and often grafted to produce new varieties of fruit. Planting beds were customarily elevated on raised platforms.

Vegetable and herb gardens helped provide both food and medicine for the monks and, in some cases, the outside community. These gardens were generally laid out in rectangular plots, with narrow paths between them to facilitate collection of yields. These beds were often surrounded with wattle fencing to prevent animals from entry. In the kitchen gardens, fennel, cabbage, onion, garlic, leeks, radishes, and parsnips might be grown, as well as peas, lentils, and beans, if space allowed for them. The infirmary gardens could contain *Rosa gallica*, savory, costmary, fenugreek, rosemary, rue, iris, sage, bergamot, mint, lovage, fennel, and cumin, amongst other herbs.

Orchards also served as sites for food production. The cemetery orchard not only produced fruit, but manifested as a natural symbol of the garden of Paradise. This dual concept of the garden as a space that met both physical and spiritual needs was carried over to the cloister garth.

The cloister garth, a rectangular plot of grass surrounded by peristyle arcades, was barred to the laity, and served primarily as a place of retreat and contemplation. The garth often featured a roofed fountain that served as a primary source for wash water and for irrigation. Some cloister gardens

contained small fish ponds as well, another source of food. The arcades were used for teaching, meditating, or for exercise in inclement weather. The square cloister garth was meant to represent the four points of the compass, and so the universe as a whole.

During the late 12th to 15th centuries, European cities were walled for internal defense and to control trade. Though space within these walls was limited, surviving documents show that there were animals, fruit trees and kitchen gardens inside the city limits.

Pietro Crescenzi wrote twelve volumes on the practical aspects of farming in the 13th century. From his text, we know that gardens were surrounded with stone walls, thick hedging or fencing, and incorporated trellises and arbors. They borrowed their form from the square or rectangular shape of the cloister and included square planting beds.

We've just strolled along a historical garden path. A relatively modern one is the idiom "to lead someone up the garden path." It is first found in print in 1925 and means to entice or give someone misleading signals. The original context may be someone enticing a person they wanted to seduce or flirt with out into a garden.

medlar

"John of Garland's list of plants grown in gardens (in his *Dictionarius*, circa 1250 CE) enumerates trees bearing cherries, pears, apples, plums, quince, medlars, peaches, chestnuts, walnuts, filberts, figs, grapevines; the potherbs sage, parsley, dittany, hyssop, celandine, fennel, pellitory, columbine, rose, lily, violet, nettle and holy thistle, as well as several medicinal herbs, mercurialis, mallow, agrimony, garden nightshade (belladonna) and sunflower; the 'vegetables' cabbage, borage, chard, leeks, garlic, mustard, chives, scallions, burnet, pilosella, sanicle, bugloss, lancea." (The underlined words are defined below.)

A medlar is a small deciduous tree in the rose family, known for its small, yellowish fruit that resembles a crab apple or a very large rose hip. When first gathered, it is harsh and uneatable, but acquires an acid flavor much relished by some. The fruit is typically eaten when it has ripened or "bled," which means it has softened and turned brown after being stored for a while.

The Old English name for the fruit was *openærs*, literally "open-arse," probably so called for the large puckered "eye" between the calyx lobes.

The medlar was grown in Greece starting around 700 BCE and came to Rome

about 200 years later. Medlars are shown in the mosaics at Pompeii. Medlars were also very popular in the Middle Ages and were the mainstay of medieval French and English gardens. In 800 CE, Charlemagne included it on a list of plants that were mandatory in the king's many gardens.

It's featured in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and the two-time queen consort Anne of Brittany's *Book of Hours* – a kind of illustrated religious manuscript popular in the Middle Ages. Henry VIII had the medlar planted at Hampton Court, and gifted his French counterpart with large quantities.

The medlar fruit is a pome (after the Latin word for fruit: *pōmum*). The best-known example of a pome is the apple, but other pomes are cotoneaster, hawthorn, loquat, pear, pyracantha, toyon, quince, rowan, and whitebeam.

Medlar fruits turn a reddish-brown in autumn and need to be harvested as late as possible in November. They should be left in a box in a cool dry place until they become soft and juicy. This ripening process is known as "bletting" the medlars. They can be eaten raw—they taste a bit like stewed apple. The dark brown flesh has that texture.

A humorous research paper from 1989 gathered together some classic put-downs, including "At best, it is only one degree better than a rotten apple" — from a 19th century gardening book — and "the medlar is not... worth a turd until it's ripe, and then it tastes like shit" — reportedly the opinion of an anonymous medieval author.

Then there's the question of how to eat a medlar. In less genteel company, people would have simply held one up to their face and sucked the flesh out directly. In aristocratic circles, the fruit was commonly brought to the table along with the cheese course — still coated in the sawdust in which it was bletted — and scooped out with a spoon. It could also be baked, roasted, made into jelly, jam, or cheese, added to tarts, or turned into brandy or cider.

dittany

Dittany is a small, aromatic shrub (*Origanum dictamnus*) in the mint family, native to Crete. Its arching stems are covered with evergreen, woolly, silvery leaves, and end with hanging clusters of small pink flowers surrounded by bracts that range in color from green to red-purple, resembling hops. It is also known as *Dictamnus creticus*, diktamo, eronda, Crete dittany, hop marjoram, and winter sweet.

In antiquity, the herb was used to flavor wine, decorate temples and gardens, and as a medicinal panacea as well as an aphrodisiac. The collection of dittany

was a very dangerous occupation for the men who climbed precarious rock faces where the plant grows wild in the mountains of Crete.

In Ancient Greece, Hippocrates prescribed plant cures to aid all manner of ailments, and considered dittany of Crete useful for stomach aches and complaints of the digestive system and as a poultice for healing wounds, as well as inducing menstruation.

Theophrastus, in his work *Enquiry into Plants*, noted that dittany was peculiar to Crete, and that it was "said to be true, that, if goats eat it when they have been shot, it rids them of the arrow."

In Virgil's *Aeneid* (29-19 BCE), Venus heals the wounded Aeneas with dittany: "Hereupon Venus, smitten by her son's cruel pain, with a mother's care plucks from Cretan Ida a dittany stalk, clothed with downy leaves and purple flowers."

Dittany of Crete has always been highly prized. Today, the wild, naturally grown dittany is classed as "rare" and is protected by European law so it does not become extinct. The cultivation now centers on Embaros and the surrounding villages in Crete. It is gathered while in bloom in the summer months and is used to make herbal tea, for use in natural beauty products, and to flavor drinks such as vermouth and absinthe.

pellitory

Pellitory is a small Mediterranean, herbaceous, flowering plant containing a volatile oil once used to relieve toothache. It has long narrow leaves and small pink flowers and grows in crevices. It may also be called wall pellitory and lichwort.

It is widely established worldwide as an urban weed. Its pollen is a significant cause of asthma and other allergies in warmer countries, but it is also valued as a contributor to biodiversity in polluted cities and it has been used as a medicinal herb. The root is used as an irritant and for increasing the flow rate of saliva.

mercurialis

Mercurialis annua, annual mercury, is a species of flowering plant in the spurge family *Euphorbiaceae*. It is native to the Middle East and the Mediterranean region, where it grows on bare, sandy soils. Its seeds are dispersed by harvester ants, which remove an oily coating that delays germination. In recent centuries, annual mercury has spread to northern Europe and many other parts of the world as an agricultural and urban weed.

It has been studied for its complex genetics and breeding system. The name is from the Roman god Mercury, due to its association with fertility.

A herm (in Rome they were known as *mercuriae*) is a statue consisting of a square block of stone with the head of Hermes (Mercury) and a prominent set of male genitalia. As the fruits of annual mercury resemble testicles, the association with *mercuriae* is apparent.

Ancient herbalists had many uses for annual mercury. In the 17th century, Culpeper wrote, "at every joint in the male Mercury two small, round green heads, standing together upon a short foot stalk, which growing ripe, are seeds, not having flowers." He considered it useful mainly for gynecological problems, and questioned its association with the god, writing "Mercury, they say, owns the herb, but I rather think it is Venus's, and I am partly confident of it too, for I never heard that Mercury ever minded women's business so much."

By the 20th century, confusion between annual and dog's mercury had brought the herb into disrepute. Dog's mercury is much more common than annual mercury in Northern Europe. It is not known whether annual mercury is poisonous to humans or not. The closely related dog's mercury certainly is, as there are cases where people have mistaken it for an edible herb such as spinach, and subsequently died. Similarly, livestock have been known to die after eating a type of mercury, but the species is not recorded.

Although this is not a native plant in America, it is reported that some First Nations people of eastern Canada have used the juices of the plant as a balm for wounds.

burnet

"Burnet" is any of several perennial plants of the genus *Sanguisorba* of the rose family, some species of which have edible leaves used in salads, sauces, and herbal teas, or as an ingredient in *finer herbes*, a mixture of herbs commonly used in French cuisine.

In England, "burnet" is also the name of a handsome moth (*Zygæna filipendula*), with crimson spots on the wings.

The word comes from Middle English, from Anglo-French *burnete*, from *brun*, brown.

pilosella

Pilosella aurantiaca (orange hawkweed, devil's paintbrush, fox and cubs) is a

perennial flowering plant in the family *Asteraceae* that is native to alpine areas of central and southern Europe, where it is protected in several regions.

It is a low-growing plant with shallow roots and a basal rosette of leaves. All parts of the plant exude a milky juice. The flowers are orange, almost red, which is virtually invisible to bees, yet they also reflect ultraviolet light, increasing their conspicuousness to pollinators, including bees, butterflies, and pollinating flies. The flowers themselves come in a range of colors from a deep rust-orange to a pure yellow and often show striking gradients of color. In the UK, it flowers in June and July. After flowering, it produces seed heads of the "dandelion clock" type.

The Latin epithet *aurantiaca* means 'orange,' referring to the usual color of the blooms. The common name of fox-and-cubs is due to the appearance of the open flowers (the fox) beside the flower buds (the cubs).

The plant has a long history of use in the folk medicine of Europe, in which it has been believed to benefit a variety of diseases, including respiratory infections, digestive problems, and skin conditions. The leaves have also been used to prepare a tisane believed to have tranquilizing properties. Herbal teas prepared from the leaves and flowers are credited with having diuretic, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties. The plant is believed to have some value in the treatment of cancer and has also been employed as a natural remedy for the control of blood sugar levels and high blood pressure.

sanicle

Sanicula europaea (sanicle, wood sanicle, black snakeroot) is a genus of plants in family Apiaceae, the same family to which the carrot and parsnip belong.

Sanicula comes from *sanus*, Latin for "healthy." It has traditionally been a favored ingredient of many herbal remedies, and it was said that "he who has sanicle and self-heal needs neither physician nor surgeon."

The plant is widespread in shady places in woodland across Europe and grows to about two feet high. The pinkish flowers are followed by bristly fruits which easily attach to clothing or animal fur and are thus easily distributed. The leaves are a glossy, dark green.

Sanicula europaea was used in Europe for healing wounds and cleaning, also to cure dysentery, ulcers and kidney injuries. To this list Culpeper added that sanicle heals tumors in any part of the body, and alleviates gonorrhea, bowel pain and more.

Filtered leaf extracts of *sanicula europaea* have shown some antiviral properties.

bugloss

"Bugloss" is any of several usually hairy Old World plants, having blue or violet flowers, of the borage (*Boraginaceae*) family. Today, these plants can be found in various temperate regions around the world, including Europe, North America, and South America.

The word comes from French *buglosse*, from Latin *buglossa*, from Greek *bouglossos*, literally "ox-tongued," so called from the shape and texture of its leaves.

In addition to its ornamental qualities, bugloss has also been used for medicinal purposes for centuries. The plant has been known to have anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties, and has been used to treat a variety of skin conditions, such as burns and wounds. Its anti-inflammatory properties make it an excellent addition to creams and lotions for treating skin irritations. Bugloss has also been used for its oil-producing seeds.

lancea

Lancea hirsuta, or "Hairy Lancea" is a plant with lance-shaped and somewhat hairy leaves and small colorful flowers.

Historically, various communities have utilized parts of *Lancea hirsuta* for medicinal purposes, using its properties to treat ailments like inflammation and wounds. Additionally, it is used to enhance the beauty of landscapes and gardens.

electuary

"To some extent the quasi-universality of sugar in medical prescriptions, from syrups to electuaries to sick-dishes, reflected a growing predilection of the late-medieval aristocratic palate for sweetness generally in the daily fare."

An "electuary" is a type of medicine that consists of a powder mixed with a sweet substance, like honey, to make it easier to swallow. It is often used in veterinary practice and can also refer to similar preparations in culinary contexts. In German and Swiss cultures, electuary is also more generally a thickened juice and honey preparation that is used as a (bread) spread or as a sauce ingredient.

There are several different types of electuary: laxative electuary, joyful

electuary, etc. The fermentation of mixed herbs in honey and their effects on each other are said to increase the medical properties already present and to create new ones.

meal

"Let it be understood by all that the craftsmen must receive a total of four courses at their midday and evening meals; on a meat day: one of soup, two of meat, one of vegetables; for a Friday or a meatless day: one of soup, one of fresh or salted fish and two of vegetables. If the fast has to be extended, five courses: one of soup, two sorts of fish and two vegetables. And in addition, bread, morning and night."

The word "meal" refers to an occasion when food is eaten, typically at a specific time, and is usually larger and more varied than a snack. Common meals include breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and they can be enjoyed at home, restaurants, or other settings. Special meals are normally held in conjunction with celebratory occasions such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, funerals, and holidays. "Meal" can also mean the edible whole or coarsely ground grains of a cereal grass.

Breakfast before the 1800s was usually just toast or some variation of gruel or porridge, and the main meal was dinner. Peasants (which were the majority in every country) had dinner around noon, after six or seven hours of work. Then, in the late 1700s and the 1800s, people began to work further from home, and the midday meal had to become something light, just whatever they could carry to work. They began to eat dinner (the main meal) in the evening.

In Medieval Europe, there were typically two meals a day: dinner at mid-day and a lighter supper in the evening. Smaller intermediate meals were common, but became a matter of social status, as those who did not have to perform manual labor could go without them.

Moralists frowned on breaking the overnight fast too early. For practical reasons, breakfast was still eaten by working men, and was tolerated for young children, women, the elderly and the sick. The church preached against gluttony and other weaknesses of the flesh, thus lavish dinner banquets with considerable alcoholic beverage consumption were considered immoral.

Minor meals and snacks were common (although also disliked by the church), and working men commonly received an allowance from their employers in order to buy nuncheons, small morsels to be eaten during breaks.

As lovers of food, we like three meals a day plus many nuncheons.

dessert

"Desserts included various sorts of fritters and crêpes, all coated with a garnish of sugar, and sweet custards."

"Dessert" is a course that concludes a meal and consists of sweet foods, such as cake, biscuit, ice cream, fruit, and possibly a beverage such as dessert wine and liqueur. Some cultures create desserts by sweetening foods that are more commonly savory. In some parts of the world, there is no tradition of a dessert course to conclude a meal.

The term (from French *desservir*) means literally an "un-serving" or clearing away. It represents the stage in a meal when the last foods are brought to the table, preliminary to the table setting being cleared and the table itself dismantled.

One of the earliest uses of the term in a culinary context is in the *Ménagier de Paris* (1393), which includes a course of "desserte" in three of the menus, one of which includes sweet pastries and fruits, another of which includes savory frumenty and venison.

Sweets were fed to the gods in ancient Mesopotamia, ancient India and other civilizations. Herodotus mentions that Persian meals featured many desserts, and were more varied in their sweet offerings than the main dishes.

Dried fruit and honey were probably the first sweeteners used in most of the world, but the spread of sugar around the world was essential to the development of dessert. Sugarcane was grown and refined in India before 500 BCE and was crystallized, making it easy to transport, by 500 CE.

Sugarcane and sugar were little known and rare in Europe until the twelfth century or later when the Crusades and then colonization spread its use. The first apple pie recipe was published in 1381.

dariole

"These were in their essence a mixture of milk (usually almond milk) and eggs, baked in a pastry shell in the oven. Sub-varieties of the dariol included fruit or fish or bone marrow among the ingredients."

Dariole is a French term for a small culinary mold in the shape of a truncated cone. The word also refers to the dessert that is baked in the mold.

According to the fourteenth-century household book, *Le Ménagier de Paris*,

which does not include a recipe for the dessert, darioles were served at weddings. A 15th century *provençal* recipe for a large custard tart called dariola is known. By the 18th century, the dessert had taken the form of a small custard tart with fluted sides. In late 19th century recipes, the custard is elaborately flavored and scented with citron, orange flower water, and vanilla sugar.

manners

"In the *Disciplina clericalis*, or *Training for a Gentleman*, written in Latin by Petrus Alphonsi at the very beginning of the twelfth century, a son naively asks his father how he ought to eat if he should happen to be sitting at dinner before the king. In response, the father first lays down a firm, sort of universal rule-of-thumb to guide the lad in determining proper table manners. 'My son,' the father replies, 'you ought always to eat the same way, no matter where you are: there is no difference between eating here or there; even when eating by yourself you should behave as if you were before the King.'

"Whereupon the son persists with a further request to be instructed in specific elements of good manners. The father obliges.

"'When you have washed your hands, you should touch nothing but what you will be eating. Don't immediately gobble up your bread, rather wait for the first course to be served. It is not proper to cram such large chunks into one's mouth that bits fall right and left; this amounts to boorishness and gluttony.'

"'Chew your food thoroughly before swallowing it, for fear of choking yourself. If you don't want to drink like a churl, make sure your mouth is free of food; only the peasant makes such sops in his mouth. And be aware that it is boorish to speak with a full mouth. ... Do not reach to the bowl in front of your neighbour to take a morsel that seems better than what you have in front of you: that is churlishness. After eating, ask for hand-water, for this is required by medical teaching and it is the decent and easy thing to do.'"

The word "manners" means the socially correct way of acting or behavior; etiquette. The word comes from Old French *maniere*, from feminine of *manier*, handmade, skillful, and from Vulgar Latin *manuārius*, convenient, handy, and from Latin *manus*, hand.

Manners and etiquette have been around for longer than you might think. In the third millennium BCE, the Ancient Egyptian vizier Ptahhotep wrote *The*

Maxims of Ptahhotep, extolling civil virtues such as truthfulness, self-control, and kindness towards other people. Some of Ptahhotep's maxims indicate a person's correct behaviors in the presence of great personages (political, military, religious), and instructions on how to choose the right master and how to serve him. Other maxims teach the correct way to be a leader through openness and kindness, that greed is the base of all evil and should be guarded against, and that generosity towards family and friends is praiseworthy.

In Medieval times, a meal was generally a communal affair. To sneak off to enjoy private company was considered a haughty and inefficient egotism in a world where people depended very much on each other. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the wealthy increasingly sought to escape this regime of stern collectivism. When possible, rich hosts retired with their consorts to private chambers where the meal could be enjoyed in greater exclusivity and privacy. Being invited to a lord's chambers was a great privilege and could be used as a way to reward friends and allies and to awe subordinates. Dining etiquette on special occasions is described but less is known about the details of day-to-day meals of the elite or about the table manners of the common people and the destitute.

In wealthy homes, before the meal and between courses, shallow basins and linen towels were offered to guests so they could wash their hands, as cleanliness was emphasized. The hierarchical nature of society was reinforced by etiquette where the lower ranked were expected to help the higher and the younger to assist the elder. Shared drinking cups were common even at lavish banquets for all but those who sat at the high table, as was the standard etiquette of breaking bread and carving meat for one's fellow diners.

Food was mostly served on large plates or in stew pots, and diners would take their share from the dishes and place it on trenchers of stale bread, wood or pewter with the help of spoons or bare hands. In lower-class households it was common to eat food straight off the table. Knives were used at the table, but most people were expected to bring their own, and only highly favored guests would be given a personal knife. A knife was usually shared with at least one other dinner guest, unless one was of very high rank or well acquainted with the host.

Forks for eating were not in widespread usage in Europe until the early modern period, and at first were limited to Italy. Even there, it was not until the 14th century that the fork became common among Italians of all social classes. The change in attitudes can be illustrated by the reactions to the table manners of the Byzantine princess Theodora Doukaina in the late 11th century. She was the wife of the Doge of Venice and caused considerable dismay among upstanding Venetians. The princess' insistence on having her food cut up by her eunuch servants and then eating the pieces with a golden

fork shocked and upset the diners so much that it was recorded in writing.

Food-fights are not, of course, even mentioned.

gluttony

Gluttony means over-indulgence and over-consumption of anything to the point of waste. The word comes from Latin *gula*, derived from the Latin *gluttire* meaning "to gulp down or swallow."

In Christianity, it is considered a sin if the excessive desire for food leads to a lack of control over one's relation with food, or harms the body. Some Christian denominations consider gluttony one of the seven deadly sins.

"It is necessary to eat in order to live, not to live in order to eat" is credited by the *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* to Cicero.

delicacy

"The earliest work to treat of food in what we may properly term the 'Middle Ages' dates from about A.D. 530 and is entitled *A Letter of Anthimus, the Illustrious Man, Count and Legate, to the Most Renowned King, Theodoric of the Franks, Concerning the Observance of Foods*. In this epistle Anthimus warns the king most earnestly about the need to eat and drink only in moderation.

This urging to temperateness and sobriety when faced with gastronomic temptations, as even a sixth century monarch might be from time to time, is a keeping with the most instant counsels for good health laid down by Greek medical dogma."

The word "delicate" means pleasing to the senses, especially in a subtle way, or exquisitely fine or dainty. A "delicacy" is a rare food item that is considered highly desirable, sophisticated, or distinctive within a given culture or region. A delicacy may have an unusual flavor or be expensive compared to everyday foods.

Delicacies vary across countries, customs, and ages. Some delicacies are confined to a certain culture, such as fugu in Japan and ant larvae (escamoles) in Mexico, or may refer to specific local products, such as porcino, venison, or anchovy.

But what is a delicacy to some (chocolate-covered crickets, anyone?) might disgust others. One must use delicacy in turning down someone else's delicacies.

wine

"Several rules bear upon wine. Anyone with a hangover should drink wine first-off the next morning — we will recognize here the proverbial hair-of-the-dog. That revered authority, Hippocrates, advises that everyone should indulge his or her health once a month by quite deliberately becoming drunk: a good, rip-roaring intoxication will induce vomiting, and this vomiting is in itself supremely useful in cleansing out all of the month's accumulation of ill humours! Furthermore, if anyone finds that drinking in the evening leaves him or her queasy simply because the individual is not used to wine, then the sure solution to that unpleasantness is for the person to become accustomed to wine by drinking it in the morning as well!"

"Wine" is an alcoholic beverage made of the fermented juice of any of various fruits or plants. Figuratively, it means something that intoxicates or exhilarates.

Wine grapes were being cultivated in the Middle East by 4000 BCE and probably earlier. The Greeks and Romans carried grape growing into all their colonies. After the fall of the Roman Empire, monastic orders preserved and developed many of the highly regarded wine-producing areas in Europe.

Later voyagers carried grape culture and wine-making to every corner of the world. Today, governments protect the reputations of the great wine regions by enacting laws that allot regional names and quality rankings only to those wines produced in specific regions under strictly regulated procedures.

In the Middle Ages, wine was commonly drunk and was also regarded as the most prestigious and healthy choice. According to Galen's dietetics, it was considered hot and dry; however, these qualities were moderated when wine was watered down. Unlike water or beer, which were considered cold and moist, consumption of wine in moderation (especially red wine) was, among other things, believed to aid digestion, generate good blood and brighten the mood.

The quality of wine differed considerably according to vintage, the type of grape and more importantly, the number of grape pressings. The first pressing was made into the finest and most expensive wines which were reserved for the upper classes. The second and third pressings were subsequently of lower quality and alcohol content. Common folk usually had to settle for a cheap white or rosé from a second or even third pressing, meaning that it could be consumed in quite generous amounts without leading to heavy intoxication. For the poorest (or the most pious), watered-down vinegar (similar to Ancient

Roman posca) would often be the only available choice.

The 14th-century cookbook *Le Viandier* describes several methods for salvaging spoiling wine; making sure that the wine barrels are always topped up or adding a mixture of dried and boiled white grape seeds with the ash of dried and burnt lees of white wine were both effective bactericides, even if the chemical processes were not understood at the time.

Spiced or mulled wine was not only popular among the affluent, but was considered especially healthy by physicians. Wine was believed to act as a kind of vaporizer and conduit of other foodstuffs to every part of the body, and the addition of fragrant and exotic spices would make it even more wholesome. Spiced wines were usually made by mixing an ordinary (red) wine with an assortment of spices such as ginger, cardamom, pepper, grains of paradise, nutmeg, cloves and sugar. These would be contained in small bags which were either steeped in wine or had it poured over them to produce the drink. By the 14th century, bagged spice mixes could be bought ready-made from spice merchants.

"Adam's wine" is a British a dialect word for water.

sick-dish

"In medieval times, the most popular sick-dishes included barley and chicken, often used to make broths. A third sort of ingredient in late-medieval sick-dishes should be mentioned, and that is sugar."

During the fifteenth century, sugar became one of the most valued and common ingredients in all sick-dishes. This reflected a growing desire of the late-medieval aristocratic palate for sweetness in the daily fare but also the increasing availability of sugar.

In one medieval treatise, the section of sick-dishes opens with a remarkable preparation called a Restorative, in which one or two capons are cooked with pearls, pieces of gold, and a broad selection of precious gemstones.

Today, we prefer to wear gemstones, not eat them.



Recipes

"Probably more than any other element that goes to define a human culture, food has potentially the ability to cross over the barriers that are erected, that develop naturally, to divide one society from another. This is so particularly when that food is recognized as more

or less exclusive to an exclusive class, and that class in turn conceives of itself as having as many international interests as strictly national ones."

We include here several recipes from the book.

Mawmenee (English)

(This recipe is from *Forme of Cury*, a recipe book commissioned by King Richard II of England in 1390, "cury" meaning cooking.)

Get two quarts of Greek wine and two pounds of sugar, clarify the sugar with a quantity of wine and put it through a strainer into an earthenware pot; get rice flour, mix it with some of the wine and add it in together; get pine-nuts and dates, fry them a little in grease or oil, and add them in; get cloves and whole cinnamon and add in; get (and add) powdered ginger, cinnamon, cloves; colour (the mixture) with a little sandalwood if necessary; add salt and let it all boil gently over a low fire; it should not be too thick; get finely shredded capon or pheasant flesh and add in.

Maumenee (English)

(We added this second Maumenee recipe as a comparison to the first one.)

Get two quarts of clarified honey, a pound each of pine-nuts, currants, sandalwood powder, cinnamon and pepper, and two gallons of wine or ale, and put all this into a pot and skim it (when it boils); then get three pounds of wheat starch, a gallon of wine and a good gallon of vinegar, and let all this steep together then strain it; when the pot boils, add this prepared mixture (lycoure) to it, and let it be thick; then get powdered ginger, salt and saffron and season it up, and serve it flat on a dish, quite hot, with powdered ginger sprinkled on top.

Frumenty (French)

Clean grains of wheat in warm water, wrap them in a cloth and beat strongly on this with a pestle until all the chaff has separated, and wash it well and cook it in water; when it has cooked, mash it; bring cow's milk to a boil, put the wheat into this and bring it to a boil again, stirring frequently; remove it from the fire, stirring, and add a great quantity of well beaten egg yolks - and it should not be too hot when they are added. Some people add spices and a little saffron and venison water. It should be yellowish and quite thick.

Ravioli (Italian)

Get a pound and a half of old cheese and a little fresh creamy cheese, and a

pound of bacon or of loin of veal that should be well boiled, then chopped; get ground fragrant herbs, pepper, cloves, ginger and saffron, adding in a well ground breast of chicken; mix all of this well together; make a thin dough and wrap the mixture in it the size of a nut; set these ravioli to cook in the fat broth of a capon or of some other good meat, adding a little saffron, and let them boil for half an hour; then set them out in dishes, garnished with a mixture of grated cheese and good spices.

Garnished Turnips (Italian)

Cook the turnips under the coals, or else boil them whole, then cut them into big slices the width of a knife blade; get Parmesan cheese or some other good fat cheese, cut into slices as large as the turnip slices but thinner; and get sugar, pepper and mild spices mixed together; lay out these slices in a tort pan in layers - on the bottom the slices of cheese with good fresh butter on top, and then the slices of turnip, and so on from layer to layer always adding the spice mixture everywhere; you will cook it all in this pan, with a good deal of butter, for a quarter of an hour or more in the same way as a tort; this banquet dish is served after the others.

White Tort (Italian)

Get ten or twelve eggs, as you wish, beat them thoroughly; cut up a pound and a half of new cheese small, then grind it with a half pound of fine sugar, a half ounce of peeled ginger, a half pound of lard or butter, and a *fogleta* of milk; then mix the milk, eggs, cheese, sugar, ginger and butter thoroughly together - and note that to make it whiter there should be fifteen egg whites; then make thin pastry on the bottom of the pan, put this mixture on it, and cook it slowly on a moderate fire; when it is almost done, give it a little colour on top with a stronger fire; when it looks done, take it out and put rose-water and sugar on top, and serve it.

Lemonee of Capons or Pullasters (Italian)

For twelve persons, get six little capons or six large pullasters; get two ounces of fine spices and three pounds of almonds, three ounces of sugar, 25 dates, 12 juicy (bitter) oranges, and half a pound of prunes; take your poultry and set it to boil; when it is cooked, get a pound of rendered, strained lard (*istrutto e cholato*) and sautee the poultry in it; split the oranges in four and set them to sautee with the poultry; when both are sauteed, grind the spices and sugar; wash the almonds in the juice (*shuscio*), grind them and temper them with the lean, filtered broth from the poultry and set this almond milk to boil in a pot by itself; as it boils, first add in some of the spices, then the prunes, washed, thirdly the dates, split in two and washed, fourthly, moistened saffron; when all this has boiled well, put in the poultry and the oranges; make it be thick

and spicy and sweet; the poultry is given to the carvers and the sauce is set out in bowls. If you wish to make more or less of this dish, take more or less of all these ingredients in the same proportions.

Asparagus in a Sauce (Hispanic)

If you wish to prepare asparagus with sauce, you do thus: get the tender part of asparagus and boil it well; when cooked, squeeze out the moisture, chop it up and then sautee it in a pan with a lot of (olive) oil; cut up an onion finely and sautee it; and when the asparagus and onion are almost done frying together, add in a little wine syrup or honey. The sauce is made thus. Get toast that has soaked in vinegar and good spices, and add a little hot water or bouillon; when the asparagus has fried, add in the sauce and boil it all together; stir constantly until it is off the fire and has stopped boiling.

Morels (German)

He who wants to make Morels, let him take a calf's lung and boil it well and then chop it small, and sprinkle on it a pinch of flour and break one or more raw eggs on it to moisten it; for this dish make wooden moulds a little bigger than a finger in both width and length, pointed like a cone on each side; fill the mould as well as you can with the (chopped) lung so that it takes the shape of the mould, then (remove from the mould); put the Morels into hot lard and let them fry until they turn brown, then remove them from the pan and cut them in two; make a filling with good herbs, made yellow, and as many grapes as you want to have, and stuff the Morels until they get full; then stick them on a little spit and place them by the fire when you are ready to serve them; then they are ready, and send them to the table on the spits in a bowl.

Baked Apples (German)

Get four apples in a lord's bowl and slice them as thinly as you can; then get four regell pears with an apple and chop them up, season this with spices and grapes and so make a good filling, which should be yellow; then get a piece of wood like a spindle with a knob at one end, push one of the slices (of apple) on it as far as the little knob, then coat this with the mixture as thick as the slice itself, and (continue to) push on slices one after the other with filling in between as much as you want to have so that it will fit into a pan afterwards; then make a dough for it, with two eggs and water, as thick as strauben dough, put the stick with the apple slices and filling on it, and wrap the dough around it; put this in a pan with hot lard and let it bake slowly ('quite cool') until it turns brown, then take it out and pull out the stick by the little knob; then it is ready.

Heathen Peas (German)

If you want to make Bohemian Peas (Behemmische Erweiz), take almonds and pound them quite fine and mix them with honey one third the amount of almonds, and well mixed with good herbs and spices, the best the cook has; the dish is served cold or warm.



Words from the Recipes

maumenee

"Mawmenee" (or maumenee) is a dish composed of chopped meat (usually chicken or capon), spices, and other ingredients; "bastard," a variety of this dish, is made with honey and sweet wine.

Mawmenee is a sweet dish, similar to the jam or cranberry sauce we use with game dishes.

bastard

"Bastard" means an illegitimate child. Figuratively, it means "thing not pure or genuine." As an adjective from late 1300s, it was used of things spurious or not genuine, but having the appearance of being genuine, or of abnormal or irregular shape or size, and of mongrels or mixed breeds.

Its use as a generic vulgar term of abuse for a man is recorded from 1830.

The word comes from Old French *bastard* "acknowledged child of a nobleman by a woman other than his wife." That probably came from *filz de bast* meaning "packsaddle son," for a child conceived on an improvised bed (saddles often doubled as beds while traveling). In German, the word meant "child begotten on a bench" (and not in a marriage bed).

Why the word should be the title of a recipe we have no idea.

morel

Morel mushrooms are a type of wild mushroom with an earthy, nutty flavor and a meaty texture. These mushrooms are a highly desired ingredient among chefs and mushroom enthusiasts because they're only grown in the wild. They're hard to cultivate, have a short growing season, and are highly perishable.

The word is of uncertain origin, but may come from Old High German *morhilo*, "a mushroom," the diminutive of *morha* "root of a tree or plant."

spit

A "spit" is a long, solid rod used to hold food over an open fire or hot coals. "Spit roasting" is a cooking technique that has stood the test of time, evolving from ancient traditions to modern-day culinary practices.

The word "spit" is derived from the Old English *spitu* and the Middle English *spit*, with its first recorded mention dating back to the 13th century.

There are several other definitions for "spit."

- saliva, fluid secreted by mouth glands
- exact image: "spitting image"
- spit-curl: "lock of hair curled on the temple"
- spit and polish: "military, indicating precise correctness"
- long narrow shoal running from shore to sea
- pierce with a weapon, transfix, impale

The spit method of cooking can be traced back to the time when our ancestors first learned to control fire. Early humans soon discovered that cooked meat tasted better than raw.

The principle behind spit roasting is simple yet effective. A long metal rod, the spit, pierces the meat, which is then rotated slowly over a heat source. This rotation allows the meat to cook evenly on all sides and baste in its own juices, resulting in a moist and flavorful dish. The consistent temperature and cooking time are crucial for achieving the perfect roast.

In medieval times, spit roasting was a task for young boys or even dogs running on treadmills. It was a communal event, with a whole animal cooked over an open flame. If no young boys or dogs were available, it required the constant attention of cooks, who would manually turn the spit to ensure even cooking.

Basting is an integral part of the spit roasting process. As the meat rotates, the cook can periodically baste it with marinades, sauces, or its own juices. This not only adds flavor but also helps to create a crispy crust on the outside while keeping the inside moist and tender. The art of basting is what often separates a good spit roast from a great one.

Spit roasting, a term that has crossed many borders, is not just about cooking meat; it's a culinary tradition that unites cultures. From the whole pig roasts in Hawaii to the lamb spits in Greece, this cooking style speaks a global language: good food!

lord's bowl

In ancient cultures, bowls were common household items, used for eating, drinking, and various domestic purposes. Such a bowl is a concave vessel of various forms (usually round) to hold liquids, including food and drink. A "lord's bowl" is simply a bowl fit for a lord, probably made of gold or silver rather than the ordinary wood or earthenware.

Some hollow dish of the sort would be indispensable, even in the lowest stage of nomad life, to receive the milk of the flock, and as the common dish in which to serve the family meal.

The main drinking vessel in the Saxon period was the horn, often from large oxen and mounted with silver for use by wealthy lords. Some glass vessels were used, but these were rare; many people used a wooden bowl called a *mesen* ("of maple wood") in Old English, a term that later became *mazer*.

After the medieval period, communal drinking bowls were called "wassail bowls," but this name dates from the 16th century or later.

sandalwood

Sandalwood is a class of woods from trees in the genus *Santalum*. The woods are heavy, yellow, and fine-grained and, unlike many other aromatic woods, they retain their fragrance for decades. Sandalwood oil is extracted from the wood, which is cited as one of the most expensive in the world. Both wood and oil produce a distinctive fragrance that has been highly valued for centuries.

Etymologically, "sandalwood" is ultimately derived from the Sanskrit word meaning "wood for burning incense" and the Latin *candere*, to "shine or glow."

Sandalwood's history spans millennia, interwoven with the sacred rituals and spiritual practices of ancient cultures worldwide. This fragrant wood's history is deeply embedded in Hinduism, Buddhism, ancient Egypt, and beyond — revered for its cooling, calming properties and incorporated into medicinal practices, funerary rites, and perfumery.

In ancient Egypt, pharaohs and high priests used sandalwood in mummification rituals, believing it facilitated the switch to the afterlife. Similarly, the Mesopotamians burned sandalwood incense to honor their pantheon of gods. The Greeks and Romans integrated sandalwood into their own spiritual traditions, adding the fragrant oil to ritual baths and ceremonies.

While sandalwood powder is predominantly known for its aromatic qualities

in cosmetics and incense production, it also finds a place in culinary applications. In some cultures, particularly in India, it is used as a flavoring agent in desserts and beverages. In traditional medicine, sandalwood oil and powder have been used for various ailments, such as fever, sore throat, and urinary tract infections.

heathen

Originally, "heathen" referred to a person living on the heath, on common land, a person of one's own community. It would then be a neutral word used by heathen people in order to refer to each other. But, in Medieval days, it became a negative word denoting non-Christians.

The Latin *paganus*, with its root sense of "rural" (pagan), is similar, but that word appears relatively late in the religious sense.

frumenty

Frumenty was a popular dish in Western European medieval cuisine. It is a porridge, a thick, boiled grain dish — hence its name, which derives from the Latin word *frumentum*, meaning "grain." It was usually made with wheat boiled with either milk or broth and was a peasant staple. More luxurious recipes include eggs, almonds, currants, sugar, saffron and various other spices, and orange flower water.

Frumenty was sometimes served with meat as a pottage, traditionally with venison. It was also frequently used as a "subtlety," a dish between courses at a banquet.

The word, and the dish, date to the 14th century, and people still cook it today. We tried it, cooking wheat grains as we would brown rice, and adding raisins for sweetness. It was delicious, with a stick-to-your-ribs quality that made it an excellent breakfast.



Food for Thought (quotes from the book)

A record from 1493 details the food provided to the farm workers, both male and female (as well as to the cook), of a priory at Indersdorf, Upper Bavaria:

"From St George's Day to Michaelmas (April to September) the servants and maids and all who work at the farm are given a water soup with pork fat, called a Rabl. Then at midday it might be a barley loaf, cabbage and some

milk. If fruit, peas and millet are available, it is for the steward to distribute them if the people have been good-tempered and hard-working. At night a milk soup, called Gräman, cabbage and milk as usual.

Every week from Easter to Whitsun (50 days) on three (meat) days — Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday — each day four pounds of pork cooked with the cabbage, making 12 pounds of meat in a week, which was not usual earlier, only on feastdays."

For the same year 1493 at Erbach in the Odenwald, the servants of the publican Erasmus were meted out the following victuals:

" ... All hired day-labourers and all bondsmen shall usually, like the servants and maids, be given meat twice daily and something with it and half a jug of wine, excepting on feast-days, when they shall have fish or other nutritious food. And all those who have worked during the week shall be generously treated on Sundays and feast-days after mass and the sermon. They shall have sufficient bread and meat and half a jug of wine. On high feast-days there will also be plentiful roasts. They shall be given a good loaf of bread to take home and as much meat as two can eat in one meal."

From morning to night, right across Europe virtually every foodstuff was cried in the street:

Mussels, lily-white mussels!

I have ripe strawberries, ripe strawberries!

Buy my dish of great smelts!

Fine oranges, fine lemons!

Fresh eels!

Rabbits for sale!

Milk for sale!



The Wind from Hastings

The Wind from Hastings is an historical novel by Morgan Llywelyn. It tells the story of Edyth, wife of King Harold of England, who disappeared forever on the day of the great Battle of Hastings in 1066, taking with her the legitimate heirs to the thrones of England and Wales. This amazing woman loved and married the King of Wales and then the man who would be King of England, only to witness his historic defeat by William the Conqueror by the light of Halley's Comet.

About the author:

Morgan Llywelyn (born 1937) is an American-born Irish author best known for her historical fantasy, historical fiction, and historical non-fiction, much of it about the Celts. Her fiction has received several awards and has sold more than 40 million copies, and she herself is recipient of the 1999 Exceptional Celtic Woman of the Year Award from Celtic Women International.



People and Places

Edith of Mercia

Ealdgyth (c. 1057-1066), also *Aldgyth* or *Edith* in modern English (*Edyth*, *Editha*, and *Aldith* in the story), was a daughter of Ælfgar, Earl of Mercia. (Mercia is approximately the area in England known as the Midlands.) She was raised in East Anglia and became the wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, ruler of all Wales, and later the wife and queen consort of Harold Godwinson, king of England in 1066.

It was a time when women were used as bargaining chips to arrange alliances. Edyth the Saxon was a political pawn for most of her life. She was married to the Welsh Prince Gruffudd (Griffith in the story) whom she dearly loved, to bolster her father's position. Then wed to Harold Godwinson, to strengthen his claim to the English throne.

East Anglia

The name East Anglia derives from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of the East Angles, a people whose name originated in Anglia, in what is now Northern Germany. East Anglia is a predominantly rural region and contains mainly flat or low-lying and agricultural land. The area has a long North Sea coastline and is known for considerable natural beauty.

Edyth's description: "East Anglia is a beautiful place of far horizons and close-up pools. In summer it is carpeted with gillyflowers and green moss, forget-me-nots and violet and butter-and-eggs. There is a memory in me still, sweet as the ache of love, of a heron silhouetted against the dawn sky over the marsh."

Ælfgar, Earl of East Anglia

Ælfgar, Edyth's father, was the son of Leofric, Earl of Mercia, by his famous wife Godgifu (Lady Godiva). He succeeded to his father's title, Earl of Mercia, and the responsibility of controlling the wealthiest and most populous portion of Northfolk and Southfolk, that territory still governed under the Danelaw and able to summon vast numbers of men to follow their thegn. He gained the additional title of Earl of East Anglia, but also was exiled for a time.

Lady Godiva

Lady Godiva (in Old English Godgifu) was the wife of Leofric, Earl of Mercia, and thus Edyth's grandmother.

Today, she is mainly remembered for a legend dating back to at least the 13th century, in which she rode naked — covered only by her long hair — through the streets of Coventry to gain a remission of the oppressive taxation that her husband, Leofric, imposed on his tenants. The name "Peeping Tom" for a voyeur originates from later versions of this legend, in which a man named Thomas watched her ride and was struck blind or dead.

Griffith ap Llywelyn

Welsh monarch Gruffudd (Griffith in the story) ap Llywelyn was the first and only Welsh king to unite all of Wales under his rule from 1055 to 1063. He was the great-great-grandson of Hywel Dda. After his death, Wales was again divided into separate kingdoms.

Harold Godwinson

Harold Godwinson, also called Harold II, was the last crowned Anglo-Saxon King of England. Harold reigned for roughly ten months until his death at the Battle of Hastings (14 October 1066), the decisive battle of the Norman Conquest. He was succeeded by William the Conqueror, the victor at Hastings.

He is called Godwine or Godwineson in this story. The most common Danish family name surnames are patronymic and end in -sen or -son. Thus,

Godwinson or Godwineson means "son of Godwin" or "son of Godwine."

Harold Godwinson was a member of the most powerful noble family in England. After his brother-in-law, King Edward the Confessor, died without an heir on 5 January 1066, the Witenagemot convened and chose Harold to succeed him; he was probably the first English monarch to be crowned in Westminster Abbey. In late September, he defeated an invasion by rival claimant Harald Hardrada of Norway before marching his army back south to meet William of Normandy in Hastings two weeks later.

Edith Swanneck

Edith Swanneck, also known as Edith the Fair or Edith the Gentle Swan, was one of the wealthiest magnates in England on the eve of the Norman conquest.

Though Harold is said to have lawfully married Ealdgyth, the daughter of Earl Ælfgar, the widow of the Welsh ruler Gruffydd ap Llywelyn whom he had defeated in battle, that marriage in spring 1066 is seen by most modern scholars as one of political convenience. Mercia and Wales were allied against England, and the marriage gave the English claim in two very troublesome regions, and also gave Harold Godwinson a marriage deemed "legitimate" by the clergy, unlike his long time common law marriage with Edith the Fair.

King Edward II (the Confessor)

Edward the Confessor (c. 1003 – 5 January 1066) was an Anglo-Saxon English king and saint. Usually considered the last king of the House of Wessex, he ruled from 1042 until his death in 1066. The real rulers of England were still the Danes, and the Danish-supported Earl Godwine of Wessex raised the most powerful voice at court.

Edward on his deathbed named Harold Godwinson as his successor, even though he allegedly had already promised the crown to William, duke of Normandy. Edward had exploited his lack of an heir as a diplomatic tool by promising the succession to various parties. Indeed, according to Norman accounts, Edward sent Harold to Normandy in 1064 to confirm his promise to William.

Harald Hardrada

Harald Sigurdsson, also known as Harald III of Norway and given the epithet Hardrada in the sagas, was King of Norway from 1046 to 1066. He unsuccessfully claimed the English throne in 1066.

William The Conqueror

William I, also known as William the Conqueror and William the Bastard, was a noble who made himself the mightiest in France and then changed the course of England's history through his conquest of that country in 1066. One of the greatest soldiers and rulers of the Middle Ages, he was duke of Normandy from 1035 and king of England, as William I, from 1066 until his death.



Words and Phrases

Atheling

Edyth: "At any rate, if my unborn child is a boy, he is Harold's legitimate heir, the Atheling, for his father and I were truly wed in York Minster. The Norman Bastard would not want Harold's heir to live, to avenge his father someday and lay claim to the stolen throne of all England!"

An Atheling is an Anglo-Saxon nobleman or prince, especially the heir to a throne.

boiled leather

"A landing party met us at the shore. Like Gareth and his men, they wore a body armor of boiled leather."

"Boiled leather" is thick leather, boiled in water (some sources hold that oil and wax were used as well; others posit the use of ammonia from fermented animal urine). The boiling causes the leather to be harder but also more brittle. The leather remains flexible for a short time after boiling, allowing it to be molded into different forms.

Boiled leather was common in the Middle Ages. It was the usual material for the robust carrying-cases that were made for important pieces of metalwork, instruments such as astrolabes, personal sets of cutlery, books, pens and the like. It was used for some armor, being both much cheaper and much lighter than plate armor, but could not withstand a direct blow from a blade or gunshot.

Alternative names are "molded leather" and "hardened leather." When it is very soft, it can be impressed into a mold to give it the desired shape and decoration, which most surviving examples have. Pieces such as chests and coffers also usually have a wooden inner core.

burning sickness

The term "burning sickness" is used in the story, but we could find nothing in our research for that specific phrase. However, reading descriptions of the common ailments of the medieval world led us to believe that the illness was St. Anthony's Fire.

In 945 CE, hundreds of people in Paris became violently sick with nausea and great burning sores on their arms, legs and groin. Many fled to the church of St. Mary where Duke Hugh, Count of Paris, treated them. The people at St. Mary's recovered and they returned home.

As it turned out, the Parisians had eaten rye bread poisoned by an ergot infestation, although no one recognized this at the time. In fact, what we now know as ergot poisoning was thought to be witchcraft due to the many hallucinations experienced by the afflicted.

Throughout the Middle Ages, ergot poisonings were common, often killing many thousands at a time. Ergot, a fungus which grows on rye and other grain during wet seasons, causes two sets of symptoms. One set is convulsive, which causes contortions, twitching and hallucinations, and the other set is gangrenous, which causes nausea, burning sores, pain and loss of limbs, as well as hallucinations.

When the people were at St. Mary's, Duke Hugh had fed them from his own clean store of grains—which promptly relieved their symptoms. In 1093, the Order of St. Anthony was founded to treat people so afflicted. As St. Anthony was the patron saint, the condition was called St. Anthony's Fire.

Thanks to the internet site *historyonthenet.com* for the information!

cat-fit

"If you insist on throwing a cat-fit," Harold told me, "I will have to deny you the company of your children at Christ Mass. It would be wrong to let you upset them during the holy season."

A "cat-fit" or "catfit" is a conniption fit, anger or panic voiced loudly and with overt bodily gestures.

If we separate the combination into its components, the meanings are as follows.

A "cat" is a small domesticated carnivorous mammal (*Felis catus*), kept as a pet and as catcher of vermin, and existing in a variety of breeds. Archaeology and genetics show that the domestication of the cat occurred in the Near East

around 7500 BCE. but many range freely as ferals. It is the only domesticated species of the family *Felidae*.

Cat intelligence is evident in their ability to adapt, learn through observation, and solve problems, with research showing they possess strong memories, exhibit neuroplasticity, and display cognitive skills comparable to a young child. Cat communication includes meowing, purring, trilling, hissing, growling, grunting, and body language. It can hear sounds too faint or too high in frequency for human ears, such as those made by small mammals.

The origin of the English word cat (Old English *catt*), is thought to be the Late Latin word *cattus*, which was first used at the beginning of the 6th century. It appeared in Europe as Latin *catta*, in Byzantine Greek as *katta*, in Gaelic as *cat*, in Welsh as *kath*, and in Spanish as *gato*.

The word "fit" has many meanings, but in this instance it is an emotional reaction, as in anger or frustration, or a sudden burst or flurry of activity. This meaning is reflected in the idiom "fit to be tied."

Do you suppose cats have catfits?

cotte

(Edyth dressing to wed King Harold) "Two shifts went on first: one of fine silk, next to my skin, and a glittering overshift of cloth of gold. Next the heavy green velvet cotte, and around my waist a girdle of gold and rubies, sent by the King."

The cotte (or cote) was a medieval outer garment, a long sleeved shift, or tunic, usually girded, and worn by men and women. Synonyms include tunic or gown. It was worn over a shirt (chemise), and a sleeveless surcote could be worn over it. By the sixteenth century, it had become a woman's undergarment. By the seventeenth century, it split into an upper 'corps' and a lower 'cotte,' or skirt, amongst the poorer classes.

cottage wool

"...my lady mother and I sat in the late afternoon gloom, mending clothes. Our wardrobes were beginning to show signs of much wear, but our position was thought too precarious to allow the purchase of new cloth. I was thinking bitterly that soon I would be dressing in rough cottage wool."

We could not find the specific phrase "cottage wool" but it is very likely encompassed by two phrases familiar to us: cottage industry and sheep's'

wool.

Many villagers and farmers in medieval England raised sheep for meat and wool. Raw wool is unprocessed, not cleaned or treated after being shorn from the animal. It retains all its natural oils and lanolin, which can make it softer but also slightly greasier to the touch. The women who wove sheep's wool to clothe their families would also have supplied people like Edyth and her mother.

Danelaw

"Danelaw" refers to the historical region in England where Danish laws were applied, primarily during the late 9th to early 11th centuries, following the Viking invasions. It encompassed parts of northern and eastern England, including areas like York and East Anglia, where Danish settlers established their own legal customs.

The term also refers to the Danish laws themselves, which English kings allowed the Danes to keep in return for the Danish settlers' loyalty to the English crown.

doxie

"A great crowd of merchants, reeves, bishops, nobles and doxies met us outside the New Gate, together with the Lord Mayor."

A "doxie" (also doxy) is a mistress, prostitute, or a woman regarded as sexually promiscuous.

fyrð

The "fyrð" was a tribal militia-like arrangement existing in Anglo-Saxon England from approximately 605 CE. Local in character, it imposed military service upon every able-bodied free male. It was probably the duty of the ealderman, or sheriff, to call out and lead the fyrð. Fines imposed for neglecting the fyrð varied with the status of the individual, landholders receiving the heaviest fines and common laborers the lightest. The fyrð was gradually superseded by the gathering of the thanes (feudal lords) and their retainers, but it was occasionally called out for defensive purposes even after the Norman Conquest in 1066.

Related terms:

fyrðman — a militiaman, usually armed with a sword or spear

landfyrð — a ground force or army

shipfyrð — a naval force or navy

garter

A "garter" is clothing, a narrow band worn to hold up a sock or a shirt sleeve, or a strap hanging from a girdle or corset to support a stocking. The word comes from Old North French *gartier*, from *garet*, bend of the knee, probably of Celtic origin.

If capitalized, Garter refers to the British Order of the Garter, the oldest and highest British order of chivalry, and also to the blue velvet garter that is its badge, or membership in the order. The Order was founded in 1348 by Edward III. The Order consists of the reigning monarch, the Prince of Wales, and up to 24 Knights Companion, plus any honorary members from the British royal family or foreign monarchies.

The origin of the symbol of the Order, a blue 'garter' with the motto *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense*, (shame on him who thinks evil of it) is not known, as the earliest records of the order were destroyed by fire.

According to one historian, the Garter is founded on the idea that as King Edward III prepared for the Battle of Crécy during the Hundred Years' War, he gave "forth his own garter as the signal." Thanks to Edward's introduction of the deadly longbow, the well-equipped British army proceeded to vanquish an army of thousands of knights under French King Philip VI in this decisive battle in Normandy.

It is thought likely that as the garter was a small strap used as a device to attach pieces of armor, it was appropriate to use the garter as a symbol of binding together in common brotherhood, whilst the motto probably refers to the leading political topic of the 1340s, Edward's claim to the throne of France.

geld-writs

"Geld-writs" were made by the King's chancery, listing the payments to be levied for the hiring and equipping of the army, the Saxon fyrd.

As a noun, "geld" means money, notably a tribute, a payment, or a medieval form of land tax.

As a verb, "to geld" means to deprive of a natural or essential part or more specifically, to castrate an animal.

A "writ" is a formal written order issued by a body with administrative or judicial jurisdiction. The earliest known use of the word is in the Old English period (pre-1150). Anything issued under authority is a writ. Orders, warrants,

and directions issued under authority are examples.

Writs could take two main forms: 'letters patent,' which were open for all to read, and 'letters close' for one or more specified individuals alone. Written in the vernacular, they generally made a land grant, conveyed instructions to a local court, or called on leaders to assemble the fyrd. It was not until the reign of Henry II that writs became available for purchase by private individuals seeking justice, thus initiating a vast expansion in their role within the common law.

In its earliest form, a writ was simply a written order made by the English monarch to a specified person to undertake a specified action. For example, writs were used by the medieval English kings to summon to Parliament people whose advice was considered valuable or who were particularly influential.

The first Norman King of England, William the Conqueror, modified writs to become mainly framed in Latin, increased the number of writs to cover additional royal commands, and established the Curia Regis in England. The Curia Regis, a Latin term meaning "royal council," consisted of the King of England and his loyal advisors. The Curia Regis accompanied the King as he travelled. This council administered all of the King's governmental activities, including judicial matters.

One of the most important members of the Curia Regis was the Lord Chancellor. The Lord Chancellor led the chancery. Chancery is a general term for a medieval writing office that was responsible for the production of official documents. The Lord Chancellor wrote writs on behalf of the King, maintained all official documents, and acted as the keeper of the royal seal. This position, in effect, placed the Lord Chancellor as the head of the English legal system.

An early usage survives in the UK, Canada, and Australia in a writ of election, which is a written order issued on behalf of the monarch to local officials to hold a general election.

gemot

"When at last a troubled order was restored, he rose and addressed the entire gemot in a calm voice."

A "gemot" was a public meeting or local judicial assembly in Anglo-Saxon England, where they were integral to the administration of justice and governance. These assemblies had quasi-parliamentary functions, advising the king and making important decisions related to the community.

There were three types of gemot:

—Witanagemot or Witenagemot: A council of nobles and clergy assembled to advise the king.

—Hundredgemot: A local meeting for judicial matters within a 'hundred' (an administrative division).

—Folkmoot: A local popular assembly of free men.

glaive

"First came a troop of fierce-faced warriors, bearing shield and glaive."

A "glaive" can be a broadsword or a light lance, but more specifically, it's a type of pole weapon, six or seven feet long, with a single edged blade on the end, known for its distinctive design and versatile combat applications. Some variations of glaive blades were even forged with a small hook on the reverse side to better engage mounted opponents.

Historical records suggest that the glaive may have originated in Wales and remained a national weapon until the late 15th century. There is a mention of a warrant from the first year of Richard III's reign, dated 1483, for the production of "two hundred Welsh glaives," further highlighting its historical significance in weaponry.

The word itself comes from Middle English, from Old French, and is related to the Latin *gladius* for sword, which also produced "gladiator."

gleemen

"Gleemen circulated freely through the crush of nobles and courtiers, singing praises of the King and his Lady."

"Gleemen" were medieval itinerant singers or minstrels.

A "glee" is a type of English part song, which began to be composed in the 1700s. The term has been as loosely used as "madrigal," from whose rediscovery the impulse for glee composition likely grew. Of course, "glee" is also defined as "open delight or pleasure," which perhaps you feel when singing a glee, particularly because the songs were often about eating and drinking.

The term glee comes from glēo, an Old English word referring both to the more common senses of "glee" and to the performance of music.

A related term is "glee club," a group of singers who perform usually short

pieces of choral music. Glee clubs were named after a form of English part song, called a glee, which they typically sang. The first song to be described as a glee was *Turn, Amaryllis, to thy Swain* by Thomas Brewer. Societies to sing, listen to, and judge glees whilst dining and drinking became popular in the 18th century and remained so well into the 20th century.

gonfalon

"The boat carried a gonfalon at its prow, a flag hanging from a crosspiece and bearing the golden emblem of the Fighting Man, which was Harold Godwine's personal device."

A "gonfalon" is a type of heraldic flag or banner, often pointed, swallow-tailed, or with several streamers, and suspended from a crossbar. It can include a badge or coat of arms, or decoration. Today, every Italian municipality has a gonfalon sporting its coat of arms. The gonfalon has long been used for ecclesiastical ceremonies and processions and is also used in some university ceremonies.

"Gonfalone" was originally the name given to a neighborhood meeting in medieval Florence, each neighborhood having its own flag and coat of arms, leading to the word gonfalone eventually becoming associated with the flag.

A Gonfalon of State is part of the Regalia of the Netherlands. The banner is made of silk and it has been painted with the sovereign's coat of arms. The Gonfalon of State is only used when a new king or queen is sworn in.

Halley's Comet

"The scholars say it is a thing called a comet, a star broken loose from its moorings and flying through the sky. For a whole week our lives were a little unreal, bathed always in the eerie glow of the unnatural star as it slowly crossed the heavens."

Comets are large objects made of dust and ice that orbit the Sun. Best known for their long, streaming tails, these ancient objects are leftovers from the formation of the solar system 4.6 billion years ago. The word comes from Old English *cometa*, from Greek *kometes*, which means, literally, long-haired.

Halley's periodic returns to the inner Solar System have been observed and recorded by astronomers around the world since at least 240 BCE, but it was not until 1705 that the English astronomer Edmond Halley understood that these appearances were re-appearances of the same comet. As a result of this discovery, the comet is named after Halley.

Halley's most famous appearance occurred shortly before the 1066 invasion of England by William the Conqueror. It is said that William believed the comet heralded his success. In any case, the comet was put on the Bayeux Tapestry — which chronicles the invasion — in William's honor. Surviving accounts from the period describe it as appearing to be four times the size of Venus, and shining with a light equal to a quarter of that of the Moon.

Astronomers in these times, however, saw each appearance of Halley's Comet as an isolated event. Comets were often foreseen as a sign of great disaster or change.

Even when Shakespeare wrote his play "Julius Caesar" around 1600, just 105 years before Edmond Halley calculated that the comet returns over and over again, he included a now-famous phrase speaking of comets as heralds: "When beggars die there are no comets seen; the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."

Halley's Comet is consistently visible to the naked eye from Earth, appearing every 72–80 years. It last appeared in the inner parts of the Solar System in 1986 and will next appear in mid-2061.

Harvest Home

"Harvest Home was the triumphal occasion of the year. To people who lived entirely by the efforts of their own hands, it was more important than Easter or the Christ Mass, I think."

Since pagan times in Britain, thanks have been given for successful harvests, through prayer, feasting, and celebrations. Harvest Home is a traditional English festival, celebrated from antiquity and surviving to modern times in some regions. Participants celebrate the last day of harvest in late September by singing, shouting, and decorating the village with boughs. After three or more weeks of hectic mowing, reaping, and binding the corn, the workers enjoy a feast of ham, beef, vegetables, plum puddings and beer.

The last sheaf of corn (grain), which represents the spirit of the field, is made into a harvest doll and drenched with water as a rain charm. This sheaf is saved until spring planting. The ancient festival also included the symbolic murder of the grain spirit, as well as rites for expelling the devil. A similar festival was traditionally held in parts of Ireland, Scotland, and northern Europe.

hogged

"Nesta sat before him on the saddle, playing happily with the

hogged mane of her 'father's' horse."

The verb "to hog" means:

- to cause (the back) to arch like that of a hog
- to cut (a horse's mane) short and bristly
- to shred (waste wood, for example) by machine
- to take in excess of one's due: "hog the credit"

To say that a ship is hogged is to say that it has been so weakened as to sag at each end, thus to curve upward or arch in the middle.

hoyden

"If he wanted a hoyden, let him petition elsewhere." (Edyth has received her first knowledge of Edith Swanneck.)

A "hoyden" is a high-spirited, boisterous, rude, or saucy girl, perhaps a tomboy. The word apparently arises from "heathen."

Lammas

"The seasons waxed and waned; we had May Day and Whitsun and Lammas, when the first bread was blessed."

In Anglo-Saxon England, Lammas was the name for the first day of August (halfway between the summer solstice and the autumn equinox) and was described in Old English literature as "the feast of first fruits," being mentioned often in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Grain was an incredibly important crop to many ancient civilizations. In the weeks before Lammas, the risk of starvation was at its highest as the stores kept for the year became dangerously close to depletion.

For many villeins, the new harvest began a season of plenty, of hard work and company in the fields, reaping in teams. In the medieval agricultural year, Lammas also marked the end of the hay harvest that had begun after Midsummer. At the end of hay-making a sheep would be loosed in the meadow among the mowers, for him to keep who could catch it.

The most important activity of Lammas was cutting the first sheaves of wheat early in the morning. By nightfall, the first loaves of bread were ready for the communal feast.

Some loaves were blessed at church. The loaves might then have been used in protective rituals. For example, a book of Anglo-Saxon charms directed that the Lammas loaf be broken into four parts, which were to be placed at the four corners of the barn, to protect the harvested grain.

In Ireland, Lammas was known as "Lughnasad" or "Lúnasa." The Irish believed that harvesting grain before Lammas was bad luck.

Most Lammas celebrations honor the savior and trickster god, Lugh (pronounced "loo"). He is the god of crafts, judgment, blacksmithing, carpentry, and fighting, along with trickery, cunning, and poetry.

In Celtic traditions, "Lammastide," "Lùnastal," or "Gule of August" (possibly from *Gŵyl Awst*, Welsh for "feast of August") was an 11-day harvest fair. People would use this time to terminate or renew contracts. This included marriage proposals, servant hiring and firing, trade, and other forms of business.

Lammastide was also the time for performing trial weddings. This allowed couples to live together for a year and a day. They would "tie a knot" of colored ribbons and women wore blue dresses to formalize the arrangement. If all went well, they would be married the following year. If the match wasn't desirable, there was no expectation of staying together.

mace

"The Bastard was no coward. Armed with that spiked iron ball they call the mace, he fought as savagely as any man."

"Mace" can mean any of three things:

- a ceremonial staff
- an aromatic spice from the casing of a nutmeg
- a heavy medieval war club

We're dealing here with the blunt weapon, a type of club that uses a heavy head on the end of a handle to deliver powerful strikes. A mace typically consists of a strong, heavy, wooden or metal shaft, often reinforced with metal, featuring a head made of stone, bone, copper, bronze, iron, or steel. The head of a mace can be shaped with flanges or knobs to increase the pressure of an impact by focusing the force on a small point.

The mace was developed during the Upper Paleolithic from the simple club, by adding sharp spikes of either flint or obsidian. Maces, being simple to make, cheap, and straightforward in application, were quite common weapons.

Morris dancers

"I saw him, tonsured head agleam with sweat and a pretty girl on either arm, dancing as frisky a measure as the Morris dancers!"

Morris dancing is a form of English folk dance. It is based on rhythmic stepping and the execution of choreographed figures by a group of dancers in costume, usually wearing bell pads on their shins, their shoes or both. A band or single musician, also costumed, will accompany them. Sticks, swords, handkerchiefs, and a variety of other implements may be wielded by the dancers.

Throughout history, the Morris seems to have been common. It was imported from village festivities into popular entertainment after the invention of the court masque by Henry VIII. The word Morris apparently derived from "morisco," meaning "Moorish." An expert suggests that it might have arisen from the dancers blacking their faces as part of the necessary ritual disguise.

The name Morris dance is sometimes loosely applied to sword dances in which a group of men weave their swords into intricate patterns.

pagan

"Griffith assured me that that was no sacrilege as far as he was concerned. 'Christ of the Cross and Epona the Horse Goddess, I would ask the blessings of every benevolent spirit on our unborn babe, Aldith.'"

A "pagan" is an adherent of a polytheistic religion in antiquity or one who has no religion.

In the time of the Roman Empire, individuals fell into the pagan class either because they were increasingly rural and provincial relative to the Christian population, or because they were not "soldiers of Christ." Alternative terms used in Christian texts were hellene, gentile, and heathen. Heathen likely comes from a term for a country inhabitant—in particular, a "heath dweller." Paganism was broadly interpreted as the "religion of the peasantry."

During and after the Middle Ages, the term paganism was applied to any non-Christian religion, and the term presumed a belief in false gods. Modern pagan traditions often incorporate beliefs or practices, such as nature worship, that are different from those of the largest world religions.

Plow Monday

"On Plow Monday, I was sent, alone and heavily guarded, to my brother Edwin in Mercia."

"Plow Monday" ("plough" in Britain) is the Monday after Epiphany, a feast day that originated in England's East Midlands and East Anglia regions during

the medieval days, as a celebration of the first day of plowing. Cash-strapped farm workers, who weren't paid for the long Christmas holiday, also took this opportunity to collect donations.

The celebrations meant that the farmworkers paraded through villages with a plow, accompanied by music, dancing, and performances. To maintain anonymity and add an element of fun, participants often disguised themselves, using soot to cover their faces. This practice allowed them to engage in playful mischief, such as theatrically threatening to plow up the gardens of those who were stingy with their donations.

Over time, Plough Monday came to include a variety of customs. One of the most beloved traditions was the addition of 'Molly dancers' — performers who engaged in a unique form of English folk dance. The day also featured the performance of plays similar to the Christmas Mummers Plays; each show depicted themes of death and resurrection.

In the fifteenth century, churches lit candles called "plough lights" to bless farmworkers. Some parishes kept a plough in the church for those who did not own one, and in some parishes, the plough was paraded around the village to raise money for the church. This practice seems to have died out after the Reformation.

"Plough Pudding" is a boiled suet pudding, containing meat and onions. It is from Norfolk and is eaten on Plough Monday.

read

"I had been taught those things deemed all a lady need know: sewing, weaving, the use of herbs and spices and the brewing of mead, how to tend the sick and do honor to guests. But Maeve's children could read! Even her two daughters could look at a written thing and name every word!"

There are many variations in the meanings of the verb "read." The basic meaning, used above in the quote from Edyth, is to scan and understand letters and words, making sense of written language.

Read comes from the Old English verb *rædan*, "to advise, interpret (something difficult), interpret (something written), to read." The Old English noun *ræd*, "to counsel," survives in the rare noun *rede*, "counsel, advice" and in the name of the unfortunate King Ethelred the Unready, whose epithet is often misunderstood. Unready here does not have its current sense of "unprepared." It is a late 16th-century spelling of an earlier *unredy*, meaning "ill-advised, rash, foolish," from *rede*.

reeve

"A great crowd of merchants, reeves, bishops, nobles and doxies met us outside the New Gate, together with the Lord Mayor."

In Anglo-Saxon England, a reeve was an administrative official serving the king or a lesser lord in a variety of roles. After the Norman Conquest, it was an office held by a man of lower rank, appointed as manager of a manor and overseer of the peasants. Other reeves held positions in towns and boroughs.

saffron

"Gytha had sent yards of saffron silk from Arundel, with instructions that it was to be sewn into my nuptial robes." She would! Knowing full well that in yellow I would appear like a jaundiced sheaf of wheat, Harold's mother had expressed her dislike for me in that meanly fashion!

I gave the yellow silk to an astonished footman and ordered a robe of green velvet, like the Welsh mountains in the spring. Blue was more becoming to me, but blue was Griffith's favorite and I would not wear it for Harold."

Saffron is a spice derived from the flower of *Crocus sativus*, commonly known as the "saffron crocus." But the word also means a moderate or strong orange yellow.

samite

"As it fell out, it took much preparation to turn the Welsh Prince's widow into a suitable bride for the English King. At five and twenty, I was much removed from the trembling virgin to be dressed in simple silks; seamstresses labored night and day to make me a trousseau of satin and samite and fine linen."

"Samite" was a luxurious and heavy silk fabric worn in the Middle Ages, of a twill-type weave, often including gold or silver thread. The word was derived originally from the Byzantine Greek *hexamiton* meaning "six threads," usually interpreted as indicating the use of six yarns in the warp.

By the later medieval period, the term samite was applied to any rich, heavy silk material which had a satin-like gloss, indeed "satin" began as a term for lustrous samite. Samite is still used in ecclesiastical robes, vestments, ornamental fabrics, and interior decoration.

In manuscript illuminations, modern readers often interpret rich figurative

designs as embroidered, but they could equally well be painted. According to the Louvre, the most famous example of painted silk, the *Parement of Narbonne*, despite being a royal commission, was only made on "fluted silk imitating samite."

Samite was specified among the luxuries forbidden to the urban middle classes in sumptuary laws by the court of René of Anjou about 1470: "In cities mercantile governments outlawed crowns, trains, cloth of samite and precious metals, ermine trims, and other pretensions of aristocratic fashion."

the Sight

"Saxons are not usually welcome here, but this woman, Angharad," — he gestured to the matron whose stare I had met with that first smile — "she has the Sight. Your soul cannot lie to her; she always knows the truth of a person. She has accepted you and that is enough."

"The Sight" means the power to read the minds of others. Today, we would call it extrasensory perception, or ESP, or clairvoyance.

The most common applications of extrasensory perception include detecting the presence of ghosts, spirits and other otherworldly beings, reading the memories, thoughts or emotions of people and objects, perceiving events throughout the past, present or future, or any other forms of gathering elusive information about the surroundings through unnatural means.

Claims for the existence of paranormal and psychic abilities have been explored extensively by parapsychologists but the existence of the paranormal is not accepted by the scientific community. Scientists widely consider parapsychology a pseudoscience.

However, we do have a sixth sense! Most people are familiar with the five senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste), but not everyone knows that we have an additional sense called interoception. This is the sense of our body's internal state. It helps us feel and interpret internal signals that regulate vital functions in our body, like hunger, thirst, body temperature, and heart rate.

As for ESP, we believe that women like Angharad simply pay more than usual attention to people's actions, attitudes, and spoken words.

thrymsa

"Each person has a certain value, Edyth," my mother began

explaining to me in her most patient voice. "A king is worth thirty thousand thrymsas, which is the penalty owed if he is slain. A ceorl is worth but two hundred and sixty-six thrymsas, which is his value to his thegn as a hard-working freeman. A great earl, like your father, has much value, because he can support his king with men in time of battle, and because he can defend his holdings and all who live on them."

The thrymsa was a gold coin minted in seventh-century Anglo-Saxon England. It originated as a copy of Merovingian tremisses and earlier Roman coins with a high gold content.

treason

"Treason" is the crime of attacking a state authority to which one owes allegiance.

This typically includes acts such as participating in a war against one's native country, attempting to overthrow its government, spying on its military, its diplomats, its officials, or its secret services for a hostile foreign power, or attempting to kill its head of state. A person who commits treason is known in law as a traitor.

Treason is probably the oldest and most serious offence in political society, with the possible exception of murder. The earliest English treason legislation, which dates from 1351, is the basis of all treason legislation in the English-speaking world. Originally, treason meant an attack upon the person or life of the monarch. But as the state became more important than its sovereign, treason came to indicate any act directed at the overthrow of the government or against the security of the state. Anyone participating in a rebellion or an unsuccessful revolution is technically guilty of treason, although only the leaders tend to be prosecuted. Conversely, it is not uncommon for the leaders of a successful revolution to try former opponents for treason.

tref

"That is the tref, the village," Madog explained.

A "tref" is a small self-sufficient village or settlement, typically consisting of a group of houses and other buildings. The concept of the tref originated in Celtic cultures, where it was the basic unit of social and economic organization, typically surrounded by a defensive wall or enclosure.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes it as "a group or area acting as a single community as regards cattle and plowing, constituting a taxable unit, and

consisting typically of nine houses, one plow, one oven, one churn, one cat, one cock, and one herdsman."

We can understand having only one plow, but how could a village get by with just one cat?

Witan

"The Witan found him guilty. Of making treasonous statements in public, saying the King is unfit to govern..."

The witan (literally 'wise men') was the king's council in the Anglo-Saxon government of England from before the 7th century until the 11th century. It comprised important noblemen, including ealdormen, thegns, and bishops. Meetings of the witan were sometimes called the witenagemot.

Its primary function was to advise the king on legislation, judicial cases, land transfers, and other matters of national importance. The witan may have elected new kings from among members of the ruling dynasty. After the Norman Conquest in 1066, these roles were performed by a similar council known as the curia regis.

The witan is considered an ancestor of the Parliament of England. Before the 20th century, historians thought it had been a proto-parliament, an institution that was both democratic and representative. In the 20th century, however, historians shifted to emphasize the witan's ad hoc and essentially royal nature.



Food for Thought

The Saxons, who had long mistrusted the Earl Godwine and his Danish wife Gytha, went about with their hearts in their hose.

"Girls are taught little of history, as it is not necessary for them to know the past," Edyth's father explained.

Edyth: "The Celts have a special attitude about their women. In Irish tales the heroines are always beautiful and courageous warrior queens. In Scot Land, I have heard, the fashion is for women to be beautiful and mightily proud. In Wales, women besung by the bards must be beautiful and delicately tender." "I, the Saxon, am none of these things; yet when my Griffith loved me I was all of them!"

How sweetly they sing, the Cymry!

"Power," Edwin (Edyth's brother) commented, "is most notable in the effect it has on others. For myself, I feel exactly the same as before, but I seem to appear much improved to the girls of the household!"

It is one thing to dream of a prince, dreams being your own creation and easily controlled.

Sorrow is a solitary indulgence.

"Which brother, my lady? Earl Edwin or Earl Morkere?"

"It really matters not; they are alike as the feet of a toad."

To care is to be vulnerable; as far as I knew, King Harold loved nothing.
(Edyth)

Which is harder: to unsay the misspoken word or to replace the word left unsaid?

Like the Irish, the Cymry believe that every man is a king. It makes it difficult to determine station.

We had gone from being poor to rich again in the length of a cat's tail.



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About the Book

In this, our third ramble through the language of the Medieval period, we've found delicious words and phrases in two works of fiction and six of non-fiction.

Want to know what life was like for many of our ancestors back then? Join us to discover the amazing amount of literature available for children in the Middle Ages, which includes Aesop's fables and books on how youngsters were expected to behave. In addition, there's a 14th century murder mystery starring an apothecary, a 15th century tale of dancing mania, and instructions on how to cook in a Medieval kitchen. We bring you unsolved mysteries from around the world, King Arthur to Genghis Khan, along with Greek fire and green children. There's also a vanishing queen and two princes, and quite a lot about Ireland and St. Patrick.

For those who are interested in how we work together to write these books, it's easy, even if we do live 2,700 miles apart, one of us in the US on the east coast and the other in Canada on the west coast. We've never met, but we've been emailing each other every day for more than 10 years and have partnered in writing three books during the last year and a half. No, we don't phone and don't text. We just happily exercise our fingers and send emails back and forth across North America.

Author Bios



Lea Tassie grew up on an isolated homestead in northern British Columbia. Now she lives and writes in the beautiful, temperate, Pacific Coast rainforest. Her fiction includes cat humor, science fiction, and mainstream novels. Her non-fiction deals in a light-hearted way with the weird words and phrases found in the English language.



Leanne Taylor was raised in Central Pennsylvania. She attended the University of Valladolid in Spain, one of the oldest in the world, established in 1241, and has traveled extensively in Europe and North America. She's been a truck driver, a welder, an interpreter, and a teacher, including in a

bilingual school in Mexico City.

Books by Lea Tassie

Tour Into Danger

Cats in Clover
Siamese Summers
Cat Under Cover
Cats & Crayons
Calico Cat Caper

Deception Bay
Deep Water
Dire Straits

Green Blood Rising
Red Blood Falling
Shockwave

A Clear Eye
Double Image
Eyes Like a Hawk

Harvest
Walking the Windsong
Connections

Two Shakes of a Lamb's Tail
Baa Baa Black Sheep, Have You Any Words?
The Wordy Ram
Wild and Woolly Words



Books by Lea Tassie and Leanne Taylor

Medieval Mosaic I
Medieval Mosaic II
Medieval Mosaic III

